A

TRAVELLER'S TALE

OF

The last Century:

BY

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AUTHOR OF LETTERS FROM THE NORTH HIGHLANDS;
AND THE CURATE AND HIS DAUGHTER.

——— Unknown, unlov'd ——
——— No fondness bade rejoice,
None soothed in pain or sorrow.

MISS MITFORD'S *Blanche*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

Deletia wondering at the little restraint and severity imposed on her, after the daring step she had taken, began to be apprehensive that the present calm would be followed by some dreadful event it was now impossible to avoid.

"Yet if actually dragged to the altar," murmured she to herself, "against my will, the ceremony cannot proceed, when I declare my solemn renunciation of Lord Valville's hand, which I shall do in the face of all the people."

Mrs. Abbot, though kind, was silent and guarded; therefore Deletia could

gain from her no information of what was going forward in the Abbey, nor of what had become of poor Victoire, whose hard fate gave her infinite uneasiness.

It wanted but a few days of the period Lady Valville had named for the marriage with her son.

When once Valville became the husband of Deletia, all surmise, all conjecture respecting her would be over. Lady Valville would accomplish her ends; and Deletia, though proclaimed the heiress of the Granville estates, once the wife of her son, would place him not merely in affluence, but in splendour.

A few days before the union was to take place, Mr. Dermont made her another visit, for Lady Valville had promised her son nothing should further impede it.

"Left, young lady," said he, "to solitude and your own reflections, since your return to the Abbey, you are now, I

hope, recalled to a sense of your error. I have put up my prayers for so great a sinner, that through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, you may be forgiven. Lady Valville is too much shocked at your wilful disobedience to bear you in her presence. She therefore desires me to inform you, the day is near at hand, when it will be requisite, that all the family should meet on a very solemn occasion. The settlements, Miss Granville, are drawn up for your marriage, and ready for signing. I came now to tell you that your presence is required to-morrow at dinner, when the lawyers will be here."

Deletia was going to reply, but utterance seemed denied her, and she actually gasped for breath.

"Answer me not," cried Mr. Dermont sternly, perceiving her extreme agitation, "all resistance is fruitless. If lenity and indulgence will not do, compulsion must be exerted."

He was quitting the room when Deletia flew after him, and throwing herself into a posture of supplication before him, with raised hands, exclaimed with energy, "Is it possible, Sir, that you, who promise to listen to the petitions of the wretched, to redress their wrongs, to sooth their distress, can appear here, the holy minister of your church, and turn aside from the entreaties of an unhappy orphan, whose requests I doubt not will ascend to the throne of mercy, if they do not reach a heart so callous?"

"Oh! Sir," continued she, with piteous solicitation, "refuse not to plead with Lady Valville. Tell her son, that no union can prove valid under such circumstances as the present."

"Obstinate, perverse girl," interrupted the confessor, (loosening her hand from the skirt of his coat, which she held,) "think not that I will sanction such folly as you would be guilty of. You say true; that I appear here

as the minister of the church of God; but know, that his minister is severe in punishment, when it is required, as merciful in absolution, where penitence is discovered. Show only that you repent of your perverseness, and every indulgence of our mother church shall be granted."

Mr. Dermont quitted the room.

Deletia rose from her posture of supplication. She was too much oppressed to weep; and for some time she sat with a look of fixed despair, insensible to all around her after Mr. Dermont's departure.

Convinced that it was now in vain to combat with her cruel fate, surrounded as she was by such a host of enemies, but one desperate hope remained, which was at the moment of the solemn ceremony to refuse Lord Valville at the altar, and to throw herself on the mercy of the clergyman, who, if a humane man, would, she seemed persuaded, under

such peculiar circumstances befriend her, at least she would make the trial.

Thus resolving, Deletia roused her late stupified faculties. She quitted the room in which Mr. Dermont had left her with so little humanity, and retiring to her chamber, put up a fervent prayer for support. Having done so, she found her mind was lightened and her spirit soothed.

CHAPTER II.

THE important morning dawned when the settlements were to be signed preparatory to the nuptials.

Valville had made several attempts to be admitted to Deletia's presence, but she excused herself from seeing him, on the plea of indisposition; for she found herself quite unequal to the interview, though too well aware she should soon be compelled to submit to his company.

Towards noon, Deletia saw from her window, which commanded a view of the park, a post-chaise and four draw up to the court, and soon after return empty. In less than an hour, the following note was delivered to her from Lady Valville:

"Mr. Dermont yesterday prepared you for the transactions of this day, I have therefore now only to signify my desire, that you appear at dinner in the dress which I have sent to your chamber, with composed looks, and ready to fulfil the part which will be assigned you; for every thing is now prepared for your and Lord Valville's signature, and the marriage will take place to-morrow by special licence in the parish church at Clovelly.

"It was my wish that the holy Father, Mr. Dermont, should have performed the ceremony in the private chapel belonging to the Abbey; however, my son being a heretic, as well as yourself, chooses his own way, and has directed that the service should be read in the church, according to the usual form.

"Remember Deletia, I shall expect your company in the drawing-room, as soon as you have drest.

"G. VALVILLE."

Mrs. Abbot, who brought the finery which Deletia was to wear, surveyed her composure with surprise. She had intended to sooth her, had it been requisite; but Deletia regarded her with such an air of dignity and meek resignation, that Mrs. Abbot appeared awed, and was departing in silence, for she seemed afraid to address her, when Deletia, with a sigh, took her hand and said, "Pity and pray for me, good Mrs. Abbot."

"Dear young Lady!" returned she, "I wish you as happy as you are good. You have my prayers for all felicity to attend you!"

As Mrs. Abbot spoke, she gradually walked towards the door, and, as if apprehensive of trusting herself with Deletia, stole away. Since her elopement, she had neither seen nor heard of poor Victoire.

When she became sufficiently recovered from her late illness to leave her

apartment, she wandered over every part of the Abbey, and stopped at the doors of various unoccupied rooms to listen, and called on her without effect. What might be the situation of this excellent creature she could not conjecture, and she felt the deepest concern; for Mr. Dermont appeared to have put his threatened punishment into execution. He had been indeed so much afraid of Victoire's active vigilance, knowing her faithful attachment to Deletia, in again promoting her escape, that he placed her out of the Abbey, and kept a watchful eye over her; but none of the domestics knew where or with whom she was placed.

When Deletia was attired, she entered the drawing-room with a palpitating heart, and found two gentlemen, a young lady, and all the family assembled. But,

"So pallid was her hue,
It did a ghastly contrast bear

To these bright ringlets glittering fair;
And there she stood so calm and pale
That but her breathing did not fail,
And motion slight of eye and head
And of her bosom warranted
That neither sense or pulse she lacks;
You might have thought her form of wax
Wrought to the very life was there
So still she was, so pale, so fair."

Lady Valville, though she did not suppose Deletia would dare to disobey her orders, was notwithstanding startled, when, with an air of dignified meekness, she softly entered.

Valville advanced towards her, and led her to a seat; while her ladyship taking her hand, said, "Allow me, Miss Benson, (to the young lady next her,) to introduce Miss Granville to your future acquaintance."

Deletia slightly courtesyed, and afterwards, was presented to the two gentlemen.

Mr. Benson was a tall big man, with a very red bloated face, which at once

proclaimed him to be a *bon vivant.* The other gentleman, Mr. Rutherford, who was of a thin habit, and of a pale complexion, had fine dark eyes, which beamed with sense and benevolence. As he regarded Deletia, he cast on her a look so full of benignity, that a transient blush passed over her cheek, and tears filled her eyes.

"This gentleman, Miss Granville," said her ladyship, "Mr. Rutherford, is to-morrow to officiate in the character of your father; he is to give you away."

"You must not, madam," returned he, looking at Deletia with earnest solicitude, "interest me too deeply in my nominal daughter; for I see, by a single glance, she would so entwine herself about my heart, only necessity would induce me to part with her."

Deletia, penetrated by this favourable impression, cast upon him such a beseeching look of pity, that Lady Valville cried

with impatience, " If, Sir, such are your sentiments, you would ill act the part of a father, if your own selfish gratification stept in the way of your daughter's interest and happiness."

A summons to dinner ended the conversation.

The repast was served in what had formerly been the refectory, but afterwards was converted into the baronial hall. It opened at each end with antique folding doors, richly ornamented, into long passages. At the top of the hall was placed the music gallery, where the old harper was stationed, who might have sat for the Bard of Gray.

The wainscot was of dark mahogany, and obscurely lighted by high Gothic windows, filled with stained glass; long colonnades of marble were ranged on each side, and the floor was paved with black and white marble. The whole aspect of the hall had a sombre and gloomy effect; but the sumptuous banquet served in

superb silver, and filled with a vast variety of viands, and every luxury which the country afforded, together with the lively airs played during the repast, tended to somewhat dispel the cheerless and sombre appearance of the hall in which they sat. Soon after the desert was finished the ladies retired to the drawing-room. The gentlemen in about two hours joined them.

Mr. Rutherford, who placed himself beside Deletia, attempted to draw her into conversation. She forced herself to reply to the topics which he advanced; but he saw from the abstraction of her manner, and the sorrowful expression of her countenance, that she either repented of her promise to wed Lord Valville, or she had been forced into it. He regarded her with tender concern; and said to her in a voice between seriousness and jest, "If my Lord Valville is not duly sensible of the treasure which he is likely to possess, I shall almost be tempted in

reality to play the father, and deny him the benediction I am to bestow on him to-morrow at the altar."

"Lord Valville," cried his mother, in a tone of haughty impatience, (as she listened with extreme displeasure to Mr. Rutherford's discourse,) "is sensible of the honour which Miss Granville is to confer upon him. It is she alone who affects a prudish reluctance so unbecoming, but this, gentlemen," added she, "is idle trifling. Produce the settlements, let them be read, and the proper signatures given."

"Never shall mine," exclaimed Deletia, in a solemn and resolute voice, "except it is by compulsion."

"How is this?" interrupted Mr. Rutherford, "is Miss Granville then urged into this union against her will? — If such be the case, I cannot be accessary to it."

"Sir," cried her ladyship, her brow clouded with anger and surprise, "you

came not here to dispute my will, but merely as one of the witnesses to a marriage in which you cannot possibly have any other concern than to authenticate its validity."

"But if that marriage is not with the free consent of the lady, it ought not to take place."

"Madam," addressing Deletia, "is it your will to marry Lord Valville?"

Deletia was going to reply, but her ladyship approaching her, exclaimed with impatient warmth, "You are too inexperienced to know what is your will."

"Sir," continued she, vehemently, "Miss Granville is a mere child in years; she is a novice in the world; she has never associated in it, and can possess no judgment of her own. It was her father's desire this union with my son should take place. You have, gentlemen, read my husband's will; therefore proceed to business.

Lord Valville marries Miss Granville solely from motives of affection."

"Take your seat Deletia," proceeded her ladyship; "my son take your's. Gentlemen, produce and read the papers; time wears; there is much to arrange before to-morrow morning."

Valville advanced to the table. "I consider myself, gentlemen," exclaimed he, "most unfortunate, and, I must add, unhappy, adoring Miss Granville as I do, at her inexorable conduct; but my mother's wishes, united with my own, to call the loveliest of women mine, prompts me, notwithstanding her seeming disinclination, to declare myself ready to put my name to the parchments, distressing as seems the situation in which I am placed at present."

"Such," cried her ladyship, "being my son's generous declaration, his will is not to be disputed. Gentlemen, proceed to business."

Her eye struck fire, as she haughtily glanced around.

In silent amazement the gentlemen regarded her, for her manner was too decided to be disputed.

" I am ready," said Mr. Benson, apparently intimidated. " Come Rutherford."

The parchments were spread: Mr. Benson, who was a shrewd active man, and had become rich by undertaking and succeeding in desperate and dishonourable causes, began to read aloud.

Deletia, who until now appeared to have been lost in abstraction, gave the deepest attention to the deeds. It appeared, according to her father's will, that she was sole heiress to the estates of Granville Abbey, and was to take possession of them at the age of twenty-one, and a few weeks would now end her minority.

" You perceive," cried her ladyship impatiently, " the importance of urging

this union without further delay. I wish to be disencumbered of the charge and trouble which I have had with Miss Granville from her infancy until now, and to consign her, in case of my death, to a tender and proper protector; and who so fit and respectable a one as my son?"

"You are wrong, Miss," said Mr. Benson, "very wrong, to stand out so obstinately against the wishes of your best friend, and let me tell you, against your own happiness, in not at once joyfully accepting so fine and handsome a young gentleman as my Lord Valville."

"Of my interest and happiness," returned Deletia, coldly, "you must suffer me, Sir, to be the judge of what will most probably contribute to either. If the estate of Granville Abbey, in right of my father, is ultimately mine, young and inexperienced as I am considered, I yet possess sufficient foresight to know it is not *myself*, but my *fortune*, which is the idol Lord Valville covets, and for

which he now worships me, in the hope of possessing."

Lord Valville, seeming conscious that it was the case, hung down his head with confusion.

"Miss Granville," continued Mr. Benson, "you see the deeds are complete, please to put your signature."

Deletia hung back.

"This conduct is past endurance," exclaimed Lady Valville out of all patience. "If Miss Granville will not put her signature voluntarily, she must be compelled."

"Show me, madam," said she, with firmness, "in presence of these gentlemen, my father's will."

"I gave you in writing," cried she, "a transcript of it the other day."

"You did so; but I wish, for my satisfaction, to see his own writing. Of course your ladyship knows it well."

"Assuredly, I do," replied she, much agitated; "but what of that! Do you

doubt my right of disposing of you. If you think it admits of a question, you shall see the original will, and some of my late husband's, your father's, letters. Defy my commands therefore no longer."

"Oh!" exclaimed Deletia, melting into tears, "if I could indeed behold these affecting proofs of his wishes, in the disposal of his unhappy daughter, then perhaps I might be induced to vanquish my reluctance, in obedience to his desires. Yet that he thought of his poor Deletia in his dying moments, is most evident."

She now drew a paper from her pocket-book, which unfolding, she spread before Lady Valville.

"You say, madam," exclaimed she, "that you know my father's hand, — read — consider the import of this terrible paper! — The Fishing-house! — the poison! — the fatal termination of —

" Mercy," said Lady Valville, with a piercing shriek — and springing abruptly from her chair, continued in a frantic tone, as she rushed out of the room. " Valville, she will elude your grasp — Why don't you hold her! — She will overwhelm and drag me!"

Valville in vain attempted to follow his mother. He seized the paper which lay on the table, and would have torn it to atoms; but Mr. Rutherford forced it out of his hand, and delivered it to Deletia.

CHAPTER III.

The company all rose in alarm and confusion.

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Rutherford, "What may this mean?"

"Nothing, nothing, gentlemen," replied Valville, "I assure you. Do not heed my mother's incoherence. She is used to partial fits of wandering; she knows not what she says. Return, let me intreat you, to your seats. Her presence is not necessary to dispatch the evening's business."

"Pardon me, my lord," replied Mr. Rutherford, "we cannot proceed under the present circumstances; on my conscience, I cannot permit it."

"Young Lady," added he, addressing

Deletia, " explain to me the nature of the paper which you produced, and your meaning in so doing."

" My meaning," she answered, " was, if possible, to discover whether Lady Valville was acquainted with the extraordinary event, to which the fragments of paper allude; some pieces yet remain in my possession, and I hope, notwithstanding my Lord Valville's violence, will lead to some elucidation. For from the strain in which it is penned, I have every reason to suppose it was written by my father; if so, her ladyship can alone develope their terrible import, to which, if I guess right, she was no stranger."

" Such a paper," cried Valville with impatient displeasure, " ought not to exist, and therefore I tried to destroy it.—Lady Valville, Sir, could have no concern in its contents. It was an incoherent fragment, written by some unfortunate person touched with the

deepest insanity, and therefore not worth regarding."

"Miss Granville," continued he, "you avowed that more scraps of these wild phantasies remain in your possession, I hope you mean to destroy them."

"There is so much method," returned she, "in the composition, combined with such touching circumstances of distress, that I shall not part with the affecting memorial of events so tragical. If Lady Valville is a stranger to these events, the existence or destruction of the fragment cannot affect her."

"You say true, madam," replied Valville with assumed unconcern, "therefore let the matter rest."

"Mr. Benson," added he, "now read the deeds; much time has been lost in this idle discussion."

Mr. Benson began to read; but Mr. Rutherford interrupted him by saying, "Acting solely by the authority of Lady Valville, until I am sanctioned by her

ladyship's presence, I absolutely decline proceeding. At any rate nothing can be done to-night."

Valville finding Mr. Rutherford so provokingly resolute, judged it most prudent to desist urging the matter further at present; and therefore, with seeming acquiescence, replied, "Be it so; you are right, Mr. Rutherford: to-morrow I hope that my mother will be well; a few hours or even days can make little difference."

Deletia's thoughts and attention had been so wholly engrossed by the important occurrences of the day, that she neither heeded nor noticed Miss Benson, a girl of about sixteen, whose presence was quite overlooked. She found herself very disagreeably in the way, in witnessing such different scenes from the merriment which she expected; and she wondered in what way the wedding would terminate, promising nothing but distress and confusion.

Deletia, quite unequal to enter into conversation with her, proposed, if agreeable, conducting her to the library; where, if she did not choose a book, there were large port-folios, full of rare and valuable prints. But Miss Benson, having no taste for any thing of the sort, requested to be shown to her chamber.

Deletia attended Miss Benson herself. As they went through the long gallery, she exclaimed, " I never was so disappointed in my life; papa should not have got me here if I had known how dull it was to be; I expected nothing but feasting and junketing, with singing and dancing, all as merry as grigs: instead of which, there is nothing but quarrelling and disputing, all getting together by the ears!"

" I wish from my heart," continued she, " I was once more in Chancery-lane. This is the dismallest place I ever saw, I am quite afraid to go to bed, for papa's

housekeeper told me such out-of-the-way places are always haunted. I am sure if I was to see any thing I should go out of my wits with fright."

At any other time Deletia would have been diverted with the silly vulgarity of Miss Benson, which even now excited a smile.

The gusts of wind sweeping along the gallery, alarmed Miss Benson so much, that she every now and then caught hold of Deletia; and she was not to be pacified, until she promised to send one of the servants to sleep in the apartment; and she remained with her till Peggy came.

In Deletia's perturbed state of spirits, the childish weakness of Miss Benson, in occupying so much of her time, would, in a disposition less patient, have been very provoking; but Deletia bore her dissatisfaction with much sweetness; though glad to make her escape from her as soon as possible.

CHAPTER IV.

Lady Valville, usually guarded, politic, and cautious, had been so suddenly taken by surprise, and was so little aware of Deletia's extraordinary attack, that she was rendered perfectly incapable of evading it with her usual cunning; when, in the paper presented to her, she actually beheld the hand-writing of her late husband, and her eyes rested on the dreadful words, "*only slow poison could possibly have effected the dire event.*"

Lady Valville could read no more — horror-struck, self-convicted by her accusing conscience, the shade of her injured husband seemed to rise before her; and in the pale and fragile form of Deletia Granville, again her hap-

less mother was called into new existence.

Overpowered — disarmed of all courage to contradict the truths contained in the paper, stung to the quick with remorse, maddening with remembrances which crowded upon her, conscious what she said or did, she rushed impetuously from the company, and having reached her oratory, she threw herself before the figure of the Virgin, and confessing her crimes, she fervently prayed for mercy and composure.

Lady Valville's contrition was, however, short-lived. Those persons who unhappily suffer themselves to be led on to the act of one crime, when interest or ambition hurry them away, are divested of resolution to withstand future temptation to evil, and are pursued, when too late, with remorse, which, on the pillow of death, when the affrighted conscience takes alarm, closes the last moments of existence in despair and terror.

Lady Valville, on acquiring some degree of composure, always sensibly alive to her own interests, was aware that no time was to be lost in slow deliberation; and she must contrive to act as if the late unlucky circumstance had never happened. In a few days her son's alarming threats would be put in execution; for Valville, once losing the present opportunity of claiming his intended bride, could not hope hereafter to possess her. Nothing therefore was left but one desperate and singular stratagem, the issue of which gave her ladyship the most flattering hope; for she was no less quick in devising plans, than fortunate in their accomplishment.

In any other case but the present, Lady Valville was aware that her son might be arraigned in a court of justice for carrying off an heiress by force; but by the will of her late husband she had full authority and sanction for her present conduct; and if she did not

now accomplish her wishes, the noble estate of Granville Abbey would certainly be unpossessed by Valville, who would be left upon her hands without patrimony, betrayed, degraded, and banished from splendour to almost comparative indigence.

Such being her ladyship's reflections, she sent for her son, with whom she was closeted for some time. After they separated, though past midnight, she presented herself at Deletia's bed-side. She had fallen into undisturbed slumber, when she was awoke by a voice calling her by name. She started up in alarm, on perceiving Lady Valville.

"Hear me, Deletia," cried her ladyship in a tremulous accent, and a countenance pale as death; "and in hearing me, I leave it with yourself to decide on your future fate."

"I ask not," continued she, seating herself on the bed, "how you came by the incoherent paper which you pre-

sented, with an intention, no doubt, to intimidate and disarm me of my resolution. Think not I am to be shaken or imposed on. The writing you showed, I admit to be your father's. Some time before his dissolution he was subject to fits of melancholy and despondence; and at those times his imagination was troubled with the most unaccountable and extraordinary fancies. In one of these fits, terrible to relate, he put a period to his life in a sort of fishing-house, which overhangs the sea, situated in a remote part of the pleasure grounds, where he spent the greatest part of his time during the last few weeks of his life, in mournful abstraction and dreary solitude."

"You were left by the transcript of the will which I showed you," continued her ladyship, "solely to my guardianship. — I now, Miss Granville, beg you to peruse the will itself," unfolding a parchment (which, as she held the lamp

to her face, she presented), "and your reason will be satisfied that I have practised no deception upon you."

Deletia would have declined taking the will, but her ladyship forced it upon her; and she, at a few glances, read the entire consignment of herself to Lady Valville, with the express desire that she should be united to her son, before she came of age.

Lady Valville saw this was the moment to subdue Deletia; she therefore proceeded; "You were left, as you now perceive, under my entire guardianship. My son, at the period of your father's death, was in his sixth year; you were four younger. Mr. Granville was passionately fond of the dear boy, who, poor little fellow, exerted the most winning ways in his power to divert him. Sometimes he did not notice him, but at others he would fondle him on his knee; and while at the same time he held you in his arms, called you

Valville's little wife. In short, by one of those singular turns of fancy people in his unhappy state are impressed with, his whole soul became bent on your being united to each other on arriving at years of maturity. Nothing would satisfy Mr. Granville, but the sacred promise which I gave him that it should be so. Infants as you both were, he took from his finger a ring of precious stone, which he had worn ever since the decease of your mother. He placed the ring on one of yours, and with it he betrothed you to Lord Valville.

" Be this," he exclaimed, " a sacred pledge of their future love, of their future union."

" Here Deletia," continued her ladyship, extending her hand and presenting the ring, " is the sacred pledge, receive it in testimony of the request of a dying father. I say no more. — Your own feelings will surely dictate what you

ought to do. I had flattered myself, the play-mate of childhood would have impressed you with sentiments of voluntary affection. Valville is not unworthy your esteem."

"If you rebel," added she, "and you prove callous to the wishes of your father, you will deserve the malediction which will inevitably pursue you here, and hereafter."

Had Lady Valville argued, threatened, or even persuaded, all would have proved unavailing. But when, with such artful insinuation, she made use of the false subterfuge of her father's earnest request, that they should be united; and she gave such a mournful and touching account of his desponding state, which the fragment too evidently depicted, every selfish consideration was at an end. To the last request of her father, however repugnant to her inclination, she was willing to make every sacrifice.

When Deletia held the sacred ring, which she fervently pressed to her lips, she was subdued. With a faint but resolute voice, she said, "Tell Lord Valville, madam, that I shall accompany him to the altar; but let him not be deceived in the vain expectation of possessing my regard. A great duty, is alas! imposed on me, to which I think it incumbent to submit."

"Tell him when once he is my husband, I will at least endeavour to respect him as such; and, to the best of my ability, fulfil every proper duty required of me as his wife, if he does not take an ungenerous advantage of my wishes so to do. But I can promise nothing more. Should he hereafter gain my affection, he will then be sure of its permanency, because the attainment must rest with himself alone, according to the mode of conduct which he pursues."

"Leave me now, madam," continued

Deletia in a low accent, "I have need to be alone."

Lady Valville willingly, nay eagerly, withdrew; but it was without uttering a sentence. She essayed to speak, but the words died on her lips, and she hastened, late as was the hour, to the apartment of her son.

Valville was transported with delight when he was informed of so unlooked-for and hopeless a change in Deletia's sentiments. Indeed he could scarcely credit the assurance which his mother gave him of Miss Granville's permission to lead her to the altar. But when convinced that she had actually made the promise of her hand, he knew her to be too honourable to withdraw her word, and he prepared to meet her with every mark of tenderness and respect on the following morning.

Deletia, once more alone, became acutely sensible of the fatal promise

which she had just given, for her word was passed, never to be recalled. She was alone sustained in this trying event of her life by the consoling assurance, that if the shade of her father was permitted to hover over her, he would see her fulfilling, in the forfeiture of every earthly enjoyment, that cruel mandate which destroyed each flattering promise of felicity in the succeeding years of her life.

She reflected, however, this was at best but a transitory scene; even the longest period of existence would soon pass away — that the dearest ties of kindred must inevitably be dissolved — the tenderest friends must separate — that the grave must receive those who were the most fondly loved — and that imperfect bliss, until time should be no more, was the lot of humanity. — A few short years — and the bitterest enemies, and the tenderest friends, would all sleep together —

animosities would then end, and the good would return to the bosom of their God, whilst others would be arraigned at the most awful of all tribunals. Sinking on her knees, Deletia prayed for composure and support; and her prayer was heard.

CHAPTER V.

In the morning Deletia, with an air of dignified composure, entered the breakfast room.

Valville flew to her in rapture; taking her hand, which he pressed fervently to his lips, he expressed, in the tenderest manner, his acknowledgments for her at length complying with his wishes, and rendering him so blest.

"You are no stranger, my lord," cried she, with dignity, "to my sentiments. They remain unaltered. If, then, under such circumstances you are content to accept my hand, I do not withdraw it. Pardon my candour, however, when I add, that it is solely to fulfil the wishes of an unknown but revered father,

I am tempted to act so contrary to my inclination, and to enter into such a solemn and sacred engagement at a moment when I feel it impossible to reconcile my heart to the performance."

"If," interrupted Valville, with energy, "the most perfect adoration on my part can awaken your tenderness, I hope that in time I shall attain it."

Deletia, who shuddered as she regarded him, replied not; for she could make no promise; but her word was given, her resolution was formed, and in passive silence she viewed the hurried preparations going forward which were to fix the future destiny through her life.

Lady Valville, pale, agitated, and *distraite*, entered the room, glancing wildly at the group assembled. She seated herself without speaking, then rose, and advancing to Mr. Rutherford said, with vehement rapidity, "Miss Granville, sensible of the impropriety of her conduct

last night, no longer hesitates complying with the wishes of my son; therefore let the marriage articles be signed and sealed without delay."

"Miss Granville," continued her ladyship, addressing her, "you agree to wed my son?"

"I do," she faintly articulated, while the words almost died on her tongue.

Mr. Rutherford stedfastly fixed his eyes upon her. "Say, madam," exclaimed he, "is such your purpose?— After the scene which I last night witnessed, what am I to believe from such apparent contradiction?"

"That my purpose is fixed, Sir," replied Deletia, "is most true. — The motives which now urge me to a step apparently so extraordinary it were useless to explain; nor is it possible to recant from a promise extorted from me by a chain of singular events unfolded to me by Lady Valville."

"If," proceeded Deletia, "deception

has been practised to draw me into an alliance in which my heart takes no share, tenfold will be the misery which will fall on the perpetrator. Peace will never more dwell on her pillow — nightly will the image of the dead rise up in judgment against her. For it is truth, justice, and integrity alone, which can build the permanent foundation of happiness here, as well as hereafter."

Her ladyship heard not all Deletia said, having sunk breathless on the couch, over which her son was bending in impatient agitation.

"Heed us not," said he to the gentlemen, "my mother is often thus — it will soon pass off."

A deep-drawn convulsive sigh escaped her ladyship; abruptly springing on her feet, the long laced veil which shaded her face, fell back, and discovered the livid paleness of her countenance.

"What wait ye for?" she exclaimed,

in a hurried voice, — " why does not the ceremony begin?" She pressed her hand to her forehead, and after a momentary pause, said, " What mean *these thick-coming fancies,* thus to arise and torment me? The spirit of the dead seemed to stand with avenging wrath before me! and yet the form, the voice was that of Miss Granville! — Surely I dreamed!" — Again she pressed her hand to her forehead for some minutes. — " Now I am well," proceeded she, — " quite well — the terrible pressure on my brain is gone — the raging fire is subdued. — Let the ceremony begin, I can witness it now! — Oh! that it were past! — be quick; — for then I would have eternal oblivion my portion."

Mr. Dermont, the priest, accosted her ladyship, and taking her by the hand, — " Allow me, madam," said he, " to lead you to your oratory for a few minutes;

there your hurried spirits will acquire composure."

"Composure, said you?" interrupted she wildly; "no, no, no! nothing can give me peace of mind! — Rage on then, ye beating brain, for destruction will be my portion."

Deletia arose, and, terror-struck, really believed Lady Valville to be frantic; compassion for her lamentable situation, mingled with the horror which she had excited, as Mr. Dermont forcibly conducted her ladyship out of the room.

Mr. Benson, always of a busy, officious temper, was out of all patience at the subsequent delays.

"Come, come, gentlemen," said he, "do set about business; this trifling may do very well for people who have no important concerns to mind; but whilst I stay shilly-shallying my time here, I shall have my office neglected at home, and every thing turned topsy-

turvy, and then who would have thought it. Do let us have no more nonsense; when young ladies don't know their own mind, they must be treated like children."

"Be a woman at once," continued he, to Deletia, "and put your signature to these papers." He took up the parchments, and began reading.

"You positively declare," interrupted Mr. Rutherford, addressing Deletia in a solemn tone, "that you are, Miss Granville, willing to become the wife of Lord Valville; consider well what it is you utter, ere it is too late to recede."

"I declare myself ready," returned she, in a low voice, "to perform the promise which I have made to become the wife of Lord Valville."

"Then put your signature to these articles," said Mr. Rutherford, at the same time giving the pen into her hand.

Deletia signed her name, and along with that name her destiny for ever.

Valville rapturously seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips. "Angelic creature," exclaimed he, "tell me only how to merit this goodness."

The hours of the day were still early. The tumult of the former had banished sleep from each individual in Granville Abbey. Every thing had been previously arranged for the marriage on the following morning, it being essential that no time should be lost in the accomplishment, and not any thing now remained to retard it.

Valville hastened to his mother, and requested her to appear.

A still and solemn pause ensued. No joy beamed on the countenance of the bride; and Miss Benson, afraid to speak, gazed in silent wonder on the scene.

Valville returned, supporting his mother. She was followed by Mr. Dermont, who led in Victoire. A burst of joy fell from her lips.

"Oh, my dear Mademoiselle! do I

really see you once more; I was quite *au desespoir* that I should never see you again. This minute repays me for all that I have gone through."

"Excellent Victoire!" cried Deletia, deeply penetrated; whilst a momentary gleam of sunshine past over her pale countenance.

CHAPTER VI.

Two equipages were in waiting to conduct the party assembled to the village church, which was situated about a mile from the Abbey.

The road wound over the romantic rocky heights of Clovelly; at the end of a sheltered lane, clad, in summer, in all the luxuriant beauty of embowering wood, the hallowed sanctuary stood, resting in peaceful sequestration apart from the noise and bustle of the world.

The way was lined with multitudes of men, women, and children. Though it was not the season of flowers, yet garlands had been formed of the never-fading greens, in which were mingled the bright red berry of the mountain ash.

When Deletia alighted from the carriage, little children, drest in white, presented these chaplets to her. Every hoary head was uncovered, in respectful reverence, and "God bless Miss Granville," echoed, with one consenting voice, from lips innumerable.

But on Lady Valville, no one cried, "*God bless thee.*" Many an aged pair gazed upon her with looks of inquisitive inquiry. Several years had gone by since her ladyship had been seen by any of the villagers, and she shrunk with conscious shame from their scrutiny. After looking with haughty scorn on the multitude, she drew her veil over her face, and with tottering steps entered the church.

Her ladyship had not been within its sacred walls, since, at that altar, where now she followed the second victim of her ambition, she had given her hand to Deletia's father. The circumstances of her life which preceded that event were

terrible. The guiltless object of her jealousy slept in death, beneath the foot of that altar! But the world knew not wherefore she prematurely slept there — Who dared proclaim her capable of a deed so horrid as was conjectured? Who could advance to say that she did it?— No eye had witnessed the performance of any crime — Who could arraign her at the tribunal of justice — or declare that her life was forfeited?

True, no eye but that long shrouded in death had witnessed the action; but there was *one eye, Omnipresent,* terrible in judgment, awful to the wicked, but to the repentant sinner, merciful and forgiving. She felt hopeless of pardon, and seemed to have reached the climax of misery and despair.

The clergyman, although a very young man, possessed an air so full of sanctified dignity, that Lady Valville sunk under the expression of his eyes, which rested on her, with a look full of penetration. Yet

that look was tempered with such meekness and benignity, his countenance was quite illumined by the celestial aspect they wore.

The persons who made part in the ceremony, were Lady Valville, Mr. Rutherford, Mr. Benson and his daughter; also Victoire Maublanc was admitted at the earnest request of Deletia.

The church was thronged with spectators, and an awful stillness prevailed.

The Rev. Mr. Arden, before he began the ceremony, cast a look of such mournful pity on Deletia, whom he seemed anxious, if possible, to have addressed apart, that she was penetrated almost to tears, for she suddenly recollected that it was at the parsonage where Lord Dorringcourt and his sisters had been on a visit.

With a clear, impressive, and most solemn voice, he commenced the service. But when he turned singly to address Deletia, in the awful words, " *Wilt thou have*

this man to thy wedded husband?" a piercing shriek from Lady Valville interrupted the service. She grasped the arm of the terrified Deletia, whom she seized with violence.

" Proceed not with the ceremony," cried she, in frantic agony, and standing in an attitude of fixed despair, she directed her eyes to the marble cenotaph, then clasping her hands together, she continued, " Look yonder! — Do you not see those figures? — Read, read the tablet, for it points at me — Oh! let me fly to the further extremity of the globe, rather than be guilty of this second deed of iniquity!"

Heart-struck with horror, Lady Valville fell with violent force on the broad stone which covered the remains of Lady Deletia Granville. The stone, broken, and in some parts worn away, yielded to the sudden force of the pressure which it received, and was instantaneously displaced. Lady Valville was precipitated headlong

into the dark abyss which seemed yawning to receive her.

All now became consternation, affright, and confusion. The multitudes who had thronged the church, fled with terror and alarm; some of the aged people muttered as they departed, " that it had come home to her ladyship at last, and that the awful judgments of the Almighty rested on her head, and no soul will pity her." Every one had involuntarily risen from the altar. Mr. Rutherford was sustaining the pale and fainting Deletia, whilst Mr. Benson was reading the inscription, endeavouring to trace out what possible meaning it could convey to occasion such disturbance and confusion, and his daughter gazing on the figures in wonder.

Valville approaching his intended wife, exclaimed, " Almost my own, Deletia, retire for a little time into the vestry, until my mother is lifted out of the horrible pit into which she has fallen, and is

conducted home. After attending her, I will return and claim my betrothed Deletia; who could have foreseen such a singular interruption to the ceremony?"

Deletia replied not, her senses were stupified, and she was borne lifeless into the vestry.

A ladder was brought to descend into the vault. Lord Valville found his mother extended on the coffin of Lady Deletia Granville; she was lifted from it in a state of distraction. Her haggard eyes rolled in frenzy. She tore her hair, and when any one attempted to support her, she resisted them with violence. "Off—off," exclaimed she, "touch me not, I tell ye this is my resting-place, my work of iniquity is finished — on this pillow will I lay my head, (clinging to the coffin,) this is the abode of death, and in this place I may hope for perpetual slumber till roused —"

Overcome with exhaustion, she sunk

down, and with difficulty she was borne by several persons to her carriage, and conveyed back to the Abbey.

When Deletia was in some measure restored, she found Mr. Rutherford, the Rev. Mr. Arden, and Victoire, hanging over her with the tenderest solicitude.

" Has Heaven, in pity," she ejaculated, " released me from an engagement so repugnant to my wishes, and is thus dissolved this unhappy union at the foot of the altar! Surely now so great a sacrifice cannot be required of me."

" No, never," replied the Rev. Mr. Arden with a look of tender compassion, " will I be accessary to such a marriage. A ceremony so awfully interrupted ought not to be performed."

" If madam," continued he in the most soothing accents, " I can render you any benefit, point out the means, and command my services." — " I have, young lady," interrupted Mr. Rutherford, " witnessed with feelings of the truest com-

miseration the singular arts which have been practised to draw you into an alliance so ungenial to your taste and inclination. But, called upon to act in my official character, I could not go beyond a certain length in an affair of such delicacy and moment. I saw this morning that you were ensnared, and about to become the victim of the diabolical measures of Lady Valville. I now say thus much; but I said it not before, because at that juncture it was impossible to befriend you."

"I now, Miss Granville," continued he, "freely offer you my services, but you must not lose a moment in accepting them. If you return to the Abbey, you will still be compelled to become the wife of Lord Valville, for he will claim you as such. He will force you into a union, to which having once assented, you cannot well disclaim. You have therefore no other alternative, but to get beyond his reach. Say then that you have the

courage, and sufficient reliance on my honour to accompany me to London? The time is so critical, you must now set off from the church-door, for not an instant is to be delayed, or all means of rescuing you will be over. Mademoiselle Maublanc, if agreeable to her, shall accompany you. I am a bachelor; but a respectable sister keeps my house, and to her care I will consign you. To prevent pursuit, we will branch out of the direct road."

Deletia felt the importance of Mr. Rutherford's friendly offer. The acceptance released her from a promise which she considered as no longer binding, and though the delicacy of her nature shrunk from throwing herself into the protection of a stranger, travelling with a stranger, making her abode with a stranger, yet the extraordinary situation in which she was placed, seemed to give a sanction to a step, which in the present instance was no outrage to propriety.

She turned towards Victoire with a beseeching look once more to accompany her.

"Surely," said the Rev. Mr. Arden, "Miss Granville does not hesitate in accepting Mr. Rutherford's protection? I would cheerfully offer my wife's, but the parsonage is too contiguous to the Abbey to render it a secure asylum."

"Into the hands of Providence," returned Deletia, shedding tears of gratitude, "I commend myself. Oh, may I be guided for the best, in accepting, sir, the protection of your sister, conduct me to her, if my faithful Victoire will again be the companion of my flight."

"I will go with you, mademoiselle," replied she, "wherever you wish, if it will do you good; only I hope we shall not be catched again. It would break my heart to endure all the penances *notre père* inflicted for nothing at all."

"My poor Victoire," replied Deletia,

"how concerned I am for your sufferings on my account."

"*Ne regardéz pas,*" returned she carelessly.

"Miss Granville," said Mr. Rutherford, "suffer me to lead you to my carriage."

Deletia now cast her eyes on her wedding garments; she was too without any covering on her head, except a lace veil, and doubted of the possibility or going with Mr. Rutherford in her present attire.

"Do not regard your dress," said he, "it is of little importance. I will draw up the blinds till we are out of this neighbourhood, and at the first town we come to, I will purchase cloaks and bonnets."

Indeed Victoire's appearance was the most conspicuous of the two, with her high Norman cap, and streaming lappets.

The clergyman came forward to bestow

his benediction. "No vows," said he, "can be acceptable to the Almighty which are not spontaneously offered at his altar. No marriage rites ought to be performed which are not voluntary. I therefore must, Miss Granville, feel released from a painful office, in not having joined your hand to Lord Valville."

"May the blessing of Heaven be showered upon you," added he; "go in peace — be wise, be virtuous; — let the fear of God ever dwell in your bosom; — make it the law of your life, the guide of your actions! — Then, whatever befal you, you will always feel that you are under his peculiar protection!"

Mr. Arden attended Deletia to Mr. Rutherford's carriage, and again, on departing, he conferred his benediction.

The crowd had immediately dispersed from the church, and were thronging

round the gates of the Abbey. Deletia and Victoire were therefore driven from the church-yard without spectators or molestation.

The journey was taken with a rapidity which defied pursuit, and left Deletia no leizure to dwell on the past, or to anticipate the future. She found herself entering the vast metropolis of London a desolate and forlorn being. No maternal home was open to receive her. — No tender cherished friend to smile on her a cordial welcome. She was indebted to the humanity of strangers for even a temporary asylum, and if she shuddered at the past, the future presented an universal blank.

CHAPTER VII.

DELETIA viewed the gay metropolis but as a dreary wilderness, for in it she had only a temporary resting-place. The first aspect she had of London was in a heavy chilling atmosphere, portending snow; and every object was enveloped in an impenetrable fog. The streets through which they drove were dirty and slippery, yet filled with innumerable foot-passengers, eagerly pressing forward; and in the mid-way the endless carts, waggons, and carriages, filled Deletia with timidity and surprise.

Mr. Rutherford's house stood in Chancery-lane. The closeness of the situation, the narrow and dark passage into which they were ushered, though a lamp

shed a dismal light on the stair-case, proved such an extraordinary contrast to the noble and spacious mansion which Deletia had always been accustomed to inhabit, that she judged Mr. Rutherford must be a person of very humble degree, from the appearance of his establishment.

A maid-servant opened the door, and Mr. Rutherford conducted Deletia and Victoire into a small back parlour.

The room looked very forlorn and comfortless; for the grate, though it did contain a fire, was not half filled. A solitary tallow-candle stood on the table, and showed obscurely the white painted wainscot. An elderly female was sitting at work darning stockings.

"I have brought you, Polly," said Mr. Rutherford good-naturedly, (presenting Deletia and Victoire,) "two unexpected guests in these young ladies, and though we have taken you by surprise, you must give them a cordial welcome, and do for us the best you can

in the way of accommodation and refreshment, for we have had a very long journey, and are weary, cold, and hungry; therefore, my good sister be quick, and without ceremony, let the girl put before us whatever you have got in the house that is good and substantial. Let us have a better fire, we are shivering with cold."

Mr. Rutherford's sister looked at him with the most profound astonishment, and a brow somewhat contracted; then fixing her eyes on Deletia and Victoire, taking at the same time a pinch of snuff to render them clearer, she surveyed them from head to foot, with looks of appalled curiosity.

"You are quite unreasonable, Mr. Rutherford," said the lady, tartly, in a whisper which the guests unfortunately overheard. "How can you expect a joint of meat to be put before you in a moment, when you had not the civility to let me know that you were coming

home to-night; and who in the world could have expected company, forsooth, without any notice. You know very well, I put the maids on board-wages when you are absent, and never keep any provisions in the house, always dining from a cook-shop myself to save your fire. Who could expect to see you, brother, at this unseasonable time of night; we were just going to shut up the house and go to bed, it is so expensive burning candles in these long evenings."

"Well, well," interrupted Mr. Rutherford, somewhat impatiently, "don't stand talking, my good sister, but try what you can do, to make us comfortable after our long journey."

Delctia before dispirited could scarcely refrain from tears at the reception she met with, which, however, was not matter of surprise when she surveyed Mr. Rutherford's sister. She was a slim shadowy figure, quite erect, and moved so slowly, and with measured paces across

the room, that she appeared a piece of mechanism, from the tight stiffness of her stays. The sallowness of her complexion had acquired an additional shade from the quantity of snuff which she took, the only expense in which she indulged herself. Her hair was combed up smoothly over a high cushion, on the top of which was fixed a fly-cap; her bare and exposed forehead showed all the ill-humour of her wrinkled brow, to the terror of Deletia; while the odd appearance of her dress distended over a wide pocket-hoop, would have excited the risibility of Victoire at any other moment than the present.

" I am afraid, sir," said Deletia, " that my visit here is by no means opportune, and that, from your benevolence, I am subjecting your sister to much inconvenience."

" Not at all," returned he, (much hurt at his sister's ill-humour), " I expect that Mrs. Parker will give a cordial wel-

come to whoever I bring to *my* house." He laid an emphasis on the word *my*. "I desire you will consider yourself at home, for you are most cordially welcome."

Mr. Rutherford whispered his sister to go out of the room with him. They were absent half an hour, and on her return, she was in better humour, and more civil to Deletia.

The fire was mended, and after some time a couple of roasted fowls were set on the table.

Deletia, however, found herself ill at ease, and most unhappy. The whole of Mrs. Parker's attention was directed, when she returned back to the parlour, to the laying the cloth, and every time the maid entered finding fault and scolding her.

Deletia's chamber was a back-room adjoining the front one, which proved to be the drawing-room, only opened on ceremonious occasions for company.

Every article of furniture was papered up in the chamber, which Deletia and Victoire were to occupy, and seemed to be rarely inhabited. Much against the will of Mrs. Parker (who deplored spoiling the brightest stove) a fire was lighted by the order of her brother, the cased window-curtains unpinned, and the carpet put down, which created much bustle and confusion.

"If my brother had told me, Miss," exclaimed Mrs. Parker, as she attended Deletia to her apartment, "that you and the other young lady were coming, every thing would have been got ready without this bother. The beds I always keep aired, but as to having the furniture uncovered, it would not be fit to be seen in a week with the smoke and blacks which fall in winter. I am sure I take all the pains in my power to keep every thing clean and nice, and there is not a week in my life, but the maids scour the house from top to the bottom; but you

cannot expect, Miss, to see things as white as in the country, where I suppose you came from."

Deletia assured Mrs. Parker that every thing was very comfortable; for, weary and exhausted, she wished to get rid of her; but first was obliged to request the favour of night-caps and linen for herself and Victoire.

"Bless me, Miss," cried she, again surveying Deletia from head to foot with curiosity and surprise, "where can you have come from, not to have brought a night-cap along with you; I am sadly afraid that it is somebad affair that you are upon," again glancing at her fine muslin dress, thrown over white satin. "I am sick," continued she, "of all love affairs, I have had enough of them (sighing) in my day, to my cost."

Deletia remained silent.

"I do not think, Miss, I can possibly lend you night-caps; cannot you take your muslin handkerchiefs and tie round

your head, for such young folks what does it signify. I will now bid you good night," added she; "but pray take care of your candle; we are afraid of fire in London; I always see every light in the house put out before I go to bed."

After Mrs. Parker departed, Victoire exclaimed, "*Mon Dieu*, Mademoiselle, what is to become of us in this hole of a place. That cross, queer-looking woman will grudge us every thing, and we are without a single friend *dans le monde* to take care of us. Pray Mademoiselle what do you propose?"

"In truth, my good Victoire, I know not — heaven direct us for the best; Mr. Rutherford's house, it is certain, is no abiding place. Every hour I dread the pursuit of Lord Valville. The events of the last week have proved so extraordinary and unlooked-for, that not a moment was given for preparation even in the way of change of raiment; but to-morrow some purchases must be made. But

friendless, unknown, unexperienced in the modes of the world, I am totally at a loss how to act; and I have no alternative but accepting the aid of good Mr. Rutherford in placing me without delay in some safe abode."

"Who, Victoire," proceeded she, "would credit the romantic events which have recently happened; and seeing me portionless, believe me an heiress, destitute of a friend or protector. Could I but discover the residence of Lady Elinor Arden, on her benevolence I think I might rely for at least a temporary asylum."

"O if I could but again see that *jolié* Demoiselle," said Victoire, "I should be quite happy, for I know she would be kind to us both. The goodness of her heart beamed in her eyes when she gave me the letter for you which the Chevalier tore."

"Suppose, Mademoiselle," continued she, "I was to ask at some of the

boutiques, if they know such a Dame as my Lady Elinor, and where her brother's *château* or hotel is to be found."

"It would answer no purpose," returned Deletia, mournfully; "I have heard Mrs. Abbot say, that in this great city people do not know their next door neighbour. I will have some conversation with Mr. Rutherford to-morrow. Now, dear Victoire, we will compose ourselves to rest."

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Rutherford, aware that the utmost privacy was essential with respect to Deletia, and that immediate pursuit would follow her elopement, felt much at a loss where to remove her for perfect security. After some consideration on the subject, it occurred to him that a younger sister, married to a curate in the Isle of Wight, would receive her, and prove a temporary asylum.

The conduct of his elder sister on the former evening had occasioned him great vexation; her ill-humour had been augmented by the secrccy preserved both in regard to Deletia's name and her place of residence, also whither she was going. Her dress and appearance had awakened

much curiosity, and not to have that curiosity in any shape gratified, mortified and provoked her extremely.

This sister of Mr. Rutherford had made a love-match in her youth, and met with such returns from a profligate husband, who bereft her of her fortune, which she had been too infatuated to retain, and quitted her as soon as spent, that her temper was so completely soured, that if her brother had not been of the most mild and forbearing nature, he never could have endured her misanthropy: but as he believed her cruel disappointment was the cause of it, and she possessed some excellent qualities, he gave her an asylum in his house, and treated her with the greatest kindness.

Adversity, it has been observed, has different effects upon different minds. The design of Providence, indeed, is ever to ameliorate and purify our nature by this means, and when it has this effect, the sufferer presents an example

of the most sublime virtue, becoming more amiable and benevolent as less happy and successful, transferring all the interests of self to the welfare of others, and emulous to be a blessing to a fellow-creature, when the little portion of individual felicity is in this short state of existence suspended.

Poor Mrs. Parker was not of this distinguished order: at least she fancied the only way of being useful to the rising generation, was to inveigh against all lovers, and rail at marriages of attachment; for she had a younger sister who was peculiarly happy in that state. She attributed it to her not having money which her husband could squander, (the elder Miss Rutherford was bequeathed a large independence by a maiden aunt, with whom she had been brought up,) for she was positive that all husbands would squander the property of their wives if they could, and run away from them afterwards.

Mrs. Parker's own strait circumstances had imposed such a horror of poverty, that she thought she could only evince her regard for her brother, (whom she loved as well as a mind so irritated could love any one,) by enriching him from savings. Her economy, therefore, degenerated into meanness, and though she really was a useful housekeeper, his generous disposition was often curbed by her ideas of justice and gratitude to him, whose liberality, even to her, she believed to be a species of the same extravagant nature, which she ascribed to his whole sex.

When Mrs. Parker took leave of Deletia for the night, she went direct to Mr. Rutherford, who had withdrawn to his office; and demanded of him who the two young women were he had brought home with him, for their dress carried with it a very suspicious appearance, the more especially as they had brought no change of raiment with them.

Mr. Rutherford positively refused satisfying Mrs. Parker's inquiries, and entreated her, on pain of his serious displeasure, to ask no questions of his young guests, who probably would depart in less than twenty-four hours. He added they were placed under his immediate protection, and he held it too sacred a trust to betray.

"Very well, brother," retorted she, with an angry toss of the head, "mighty well!—you shall certainly be obeyed, but remember, I hate all such secret negociations. It looks very bad when people do not act above-board. No doubt you are well paid, but I'll be plain to tell you, ill-gotten money does not prosper. Poor Mr. Parker, for instance, what did he make of all mine, but squander it at the gaming-table?"

"I dare say, Miss, whatever you call her, for you have not thought proper to give her a name, is some perverse young thing, run away from her parents or

guardian, for I never knew a beauty good for any thing in my life, or who did not plague the heart out of every one belonging to her. If you take my advice, Mr. Rutherford, wash your hands of her at once, and have no more concern with her, for you will only bring an old house about your head, and get no thanks into the bargain."

"I'll bet my life this is an elopement, from what looks like wedding finery, and these love affairs are always full of romance and folly, just for some extravagant fortune-hunter to make you his prey, and get hold of the money. But do as you please, brother; it is no affair of mine."

Thus haranguing, Mrs. Parker returned to the parlour, her brother having, before she departed, ordered her to provide a nice supper, for which he threw the cash down upon the table.

The late tumult, hurry, and anxiety of Deletia's life, now fell with violence on her exhausted spirits and frame. She

had sunk into a disturbed slumber, when she was awaked by the sound of a bell which rung violently. She started up in alarm, for day had not yet dawned, and no person in the house appeared to be stirring. Victoire was in a profound sleep; and Deletia was averse to disturb her. She listened with anxiety to discover the cause of the alarm, when after a pause of some minutes the bell sounded more loudly than before. Springing out of bed, she opened the chamber-door, when she beheld slowly descending from the upper staircase, a female servant half-dressed, carrying a lighted lamp in her hand, and muttering to herself in a tone of discontent.

Deletia now conjectured what proved to be the case; Mrs. Parker had been ringing up the maids; and just after she heard the watchman go past six o'clock. Deletia returned to her bed; but her rest was effectually broken by the shrill voice of Mrs. Parker, which sounded through the

house, as she followed the servants down stairs.

"You lazy hussey," exclaimed she, "what do you mean by not rising when you heard me ring the bell; go down stairs this minute, and let me see the fire lighted, and your master's breakfast on the table by eight o'clock."

Deletia, shocked and disgusted at the brutal vulgarity of Mrs. Parker, shrunk from the idea of encountering her sharp black eyes and frowning brow at the breakfast table; and she would have excused herself from appearing, had she not been afraid, by discomposing the ceremony of the house, to incur her displeasure.

Soon after seven o'clock the maid knocked at her chamber-door, and entered the apartment. "My mistress says, Miss, you must get up, for the breakfast will be on the table at eight o'clock, and she never waits for any one. I am sorry to disturb you, but there is no

peace in the house when my master is not in the way. Such a hurly-burly Mrs. Parker kicks up, I am sure one had better be dead than worried out of one's existence, and almost starved to death into the bargain. I don't wonder my mistress is so thin, for she frets the skin off her bones with her fidgeting ways. I have not been in the house a week, and feggs, she shan't catch me here a day after my month is up. If I go before, she is so stingy she won't pay me my wages, or I would see her at old Nick before I would serve her another day.'"

The girl might have run on for an hour without Deletia's interrupting her; for it was a strain of complaint to which she had been so wholly unused, that she knew not how either to pity, or sympathize in her grievances.

Victoire now awoke. "Dear Mademoiselle," exclaimed she, with surprise, on seeing her almost dressed,

"what do you rise so early for; I hope you are not ill?"

"Not ill, Victoire," replied she, sighing heavily, "only languid and unhappy." She then informed her of the summons below, and desired her to be speedy.

"Do," said Victoire, "beg Mr. Rutherford not to keep us in this vile dark house, for I declare I can neither see or breathe. We shall be blind and suffocated with the fog; it gets into my eyes and throat. If this is London, of which people talk so much, *Dieu me defendre* from such a place! I wonder all the *noblesse* are not smoke-dried, and as yellow as a *louis-d'or*."

"O Mademoiselle," added she, "if I had you only in dear France, you would then be as blithe as a bird; the air is so light, and the sky so clear blue, with the sun shining so bright, your eyes would be quite dazzled. Heigh-ho!"

CHAPTER IX.

When Deletia and Victoire descended to the parlour, they found Mrs. Parker seated alone at the breakfast table.

"Good morning to you, Miss," said she, scowling her brow, and looking with inquisitive ill-nature.

Deletia, with her genuine good-breeding, returned her ungracious salutation; and then, at a loss what to say, inquired after Mr. Rutherford.

"My brother, I suppose, has overslept himself, for he is used to be punctual. These hurry-scurry journies are very imprudent in a man at his time of life. He don't consider he is not so young as he was twenty years ago: however it is no business of mine; I am a

fool for troubling myself about him. I am in none of his secrets I assure you, miss, as to where he has been; nor do I even know your name, or where you are going."

"But I will be free to say," continued she, "whether it offends you or not, when people are so close, it is seldom for any good purpose. However, as my brother's guests, you and the other miss, who looks like a foreigner, are very welcome, as I do not doubt but you are very proper young persons, or he would not have brought you here."

"Permit me to give you a piece of advice, which I assure you is out of good-will; as you seem to have sense, no doubt you will take it in good part, as it is well meant. Do not, if you have any secret attachment, be rash in accepting the offer of the first fortune-hunter who would entrap you, if you have money. When I was a young girl, I was silly enough to believe all the ful-

some compliments the men paid me, and what did I get by it?—a good-for-nothing husband, who squandered all my money, and did not leave me a penny to bless myself with."

She had scarcely finished the sentence, when Mr. Rutherford appeared, to the great relief of Deletia, who had found it difficult to restrain her tears, from the extreme depression of her spirits.

He approached her with respectful kindness, and addressed her as he took her hand, in an accent at once soothing and friendly.

Mrs. Parker, restrained by her brother's presence, became silent, and busied herself in pouring out the tea.

"Your heavy eye," said Mr. Rutherford to Deletia, "and pallid countenance, I am sorry to observe, proclaim want of rest; yet if, my dear, you are equal so soon to undertake another journey, I shall be ready, in two hours, to attend you to the place destined to be your

abode. Till I am ready, you will amuse yourself in selecting such necessary wearing-apparel as you like for yourself and your companion. Choose unsparingly, for in the country you cannot be so readily supplied."

This instance of Mr. Rutherford's profuse extravagance, in thus clothing, without limitation, these two stranger girls, Mrs. Parker heard with such extreme indignation and surprise, that for some minutes she seemed deprived of speech; but, at length, bursting forth, she said, in a voice half choaked with crying, so great was her displeasure and vexation, "Mr. Rutherford, you will certainly ruin yourself. What does it signify, all my savings and economy, if you are to lavish your money in this way upon nobody knows who? I suppose the young misses are not without clothes, though they have brought none but what is on their back, which is rather extraordinary; but cannot you send for them, instead

of being so extravagant to buy more? Indeed, brother, I hope you do not intend it!"

"Peace, sister," cried he, in a resolute tone; "and do not offer your opinion in a matter, which, though well intentioned, does not concern you."

Mrs. Parker, piqued at the little impression her advice made on her brother, left the room.

Mr. Rutherford told Deletia he intended to conduct her to a female relation of his own, whose gentle disposition and kind heart would cheer and comfort her, and that in the residence he had chosen for her she would be quite out of the line of pursuit. He then left her to make some necessary arrangements for his journey.

To avoid any further dispute with Mrs. Parker in regard to the necessary wardrobe for Deletia and Victoire, he sent to the person he had employed to send a proper stock of ready-made

articles, and to pack and send them, without further trouble, immediately to Chancery-lane.

Mrs. Parker had but just returned to the parlour, when the post-chaise was announced.

When Deletia rose to depart, she gracefully thanked Mrs. Parker for her civilities; but she turned from her in silence, and said sharply to her brother, "Fine weather this to set out on a journey; I shall expect to hear you are upset in the snow, and have some of your limbs broken."

"It must be very pressing business, indeed, to take you abroad, when one would not turn out a dog in such a miserable day. However, as I before said, it is no affair of mine if you catch cold; but remember, Mr. Rutherford, I have given you my advice, and would spare you the expense of a long apothecary's bill to pay."

Mrs. Parker next addressed Deletia,

"You are in a great haste, miss, to get away, to marry perhaps in a hurry, like myself, and repent at leisure.—You don't consider that my poor brother is not so young as you are, to bear the cold, and jolting along bad roads, to indulge some romantic whim, for if you had a grain of feeling you would not be so selfish and inconsiderate."

Mr. Rutherford, without allowing time to give a reply to his sister, took Deletia in one hand and Victoire in the other, and seating himself between them in the post chaise, told the postilion to drive to the top of the street, when he would direct him what road to take.

It snowed heavily, and the atmosphere portended a deep fall; but the journey was far too urgent to be deferred, even for a few hours. The road, however, which they had to travel was so excellent and much frequented, that there was little danger of being impeded in the way.

The rapidity with which the late events had succeeded one another, happily gave Deletia no leisure to dwell on the past, or to penetrate into the future. But she most depressingly felt her calamitous situation, sensible that she was wholly dependent on the friendship and benevolent generosity of Mr. Rutherford, until some favourable change occurred in her destiny, and she was put into the lawful possession of her property.

Mr. Rutherford had a mind above sinister motives. He acted in the present instance from pure humanity, and a genuine feeling of benevolence. He was resolved not to desert the friendless orphan, but to take those legal steps which would secure Miss Granville's rights, and ultimately place her beyond the reach of Lord Valville.

The laws of England were happily founded on the strictest equity; and he was confident when her case was fairly represented, her injuries would be re-

dressed. In the mean time he was prepared to withstand with firmness every attack from the Valvilles; and whilst they put in their claims, he would support Miss Granville's in every court of justice.

Resolved that they should neither intimidate nor surprise her, he was conveying her to the house of a sister many years younger than himself, married to a worthy curate in the Isle of Wight. Mrs. Clinton was of a different order of beings from Mrs. Parker. She possessed a simplicity of character, an artlessness of manner, which approached not, however, to insipidity, because her understanding was excellent; with a gentle and even temper, much of the milk of human kindness filled her bosom. Though she and her husband were not affluent, therefore obliged to live sparingly, she was always the friend of the poor widow and destitute orphan. When she could not confer bounty, she bestowed kind-

ness, and reconciled them to the dispensations of Providence. Her husband practised the doctrines which he taught; and the cheerful contentment which they displayed in all their actions, the happy regularity of their family, and the good conduct of their children, powerfully diffused the same feeling of moral virtue throughout the whole of his parishioners.

Such were the excellent couple, with whom Mr. Rutherford promised himself Deletia would possess, at least, temporary tranquillity and security.

The journey was accomplished as rapidly as the former, for they travelled without resting.

They were fortunate in a favourable wind, and for the season, a tolerably smooth sea. Mr. Rutherford immediately hired a sailing-boat, and in a very short period after embarking they arrived safely at ——.

The sound of a post-chaise at the gate

brought the worthy curate to the door.

When he saw Mr. Rutherford alight, his benignant smiles and extended hand cordially bade him welcome.

They entered the house together, when Mr. Rutherford informed his sister and her husband the cause of his journey; and he requested of them an asylum for Deletia and Victoire.

The request was no sooner made than Mrs. Clinton hastened to the chaise door, and with engaging affability, begged the strangers to alight, assuring them, with warm-hearted sincerity, of a cordial welcome.

The gentle demeanour and persuasive address of Mrs. Clinton instantly impressed Deletia with a sense of her kindness. Mrs. Clinton was neither servilely officious, nor rudely inquisitive. She saw the young stranger was ill, and apparently unhappy: that circumstance alone would have excited her tenderness

and compassion, even if her brother's wishes had been unknown.

Mrs. Clinton oppressed not Deletia with idle questions, but with cheerfulness and activity, soon had a chamber prepared for her, and another small one within it for her companion. With that native politeness, the sure accompaniment of a well-regulated mind, Mrs. Clinton desired Deletia to consider herself at home, and in the house of friends whose first wish would be to promote her comfort.

Deletia, harassed and exhausted, gladly availed herself of Mrs. Clinton's kind offer, and making her excuses, retired with Victoire.

CHAPTER X.

While Deletia was travelling with Mr. Rutherford to London, the discovery of her flight was retarded for some hours, from the dreadful state in which Lady Valville remained, after she was carried back to the Abbey. Valville thought her dying, for no sooner did she recover from one fainting than she relapsed into another; and when for a few minutes her senses were partially restored, she entreated with such earnestness that her son would not leave her, he reluctantly consented to remain, firmly believing the next hour would terminate her existence.

He, however, requested Mr. Benson to hasten to the church, and conduct

Miss Granville home, convinced from the fatal interruption of the ceremony, she would not at present consent to go through it again. He begged Mr. Benson to assure her he would not intrude himself upon her till he obtained permission, tenderly recommending the quiet of her own chamber till the perturbed state of his mother's mind was somewhat calmed.

When Mr. Benson reached the church porch, great was his amazement to find the door locked, the people dispersed, and all around as still as the silent graves on which he trod. Instead of going to the parsonage to inquire what had become of Miss Granville, he stood for some time apparently stupified. Vacantly gazing around, he at length said to his daughter, who accompanied him, "A pretty sort of a business they have made of it — an odd sort of a wedding, upon my soul: my lady beside herself — my lord choused out of his wife —

and the young thing disappeared — ha! ha! ha! — I cannot help laughing, it is so comical. — Well! — what is to be done?"

After a few minutes' consideration, he added, "My lord is such a fiery sort of a gentleman, I think it would not be prudent to go back to the Abbey; for when I tell him that Miss Granville is not to be found, he will rave like his mad mother; and ten to one, but in a fit of passion, not only blow out his own brains, but perhaps mine also."

"We will walk, Kitty, to the village, where I will procure some sort of a conveyance to the first post town, and there take a chaise on to London. It is not safe to go back to the Abbey; for in my mind they are all of them only fit for Bedlam. My time is too precious to be longer thrown away on a wild goose chace; but I shall let them know that I expect to be handsomely paid for all this fool's business."

Mr. Benson and his daughter hastened to the village, where they procured a miller's cart, which took them to Bideford.

Fortunate for Deletia did this plan of Mr. Benson's prove. It not only prevented immediate pursuit, but gave leisure to remove her to that remote corner which eluded almost every chance of discovery.

For some hours after Lady Valville was carried back to the Abbey, in vain were every means used to sooth her frantic ravings, or to bring her to a sense of recollection. Deletia's union with her son she no longer expressed the same eager desire to promote. She alone reverted to the marble figures on the cenotaph of Lady Deletia and herself, which had struck her with such horror. She enquired who had placed them there; and started every time the door opened, covering her face with her hands to conceal her affright, and requested her son

to shield her from the presence of Deletia Granville.

Lord Valville, afraid that his mother might be guilty of self-destruction, which in her unconscious state of insensibility she several times attempted, entreated Mr. Dermont not to quit her for a moment, as he was the only person of whom she stood in the least awe.

"What mean those figures," cried she, "who dare arraign and drag me to trial?—None can be my accuser—The dead cannot rise in judgment against me, for they can tell no tales."

"Mr. Dermont," continued her ladyship, "you will give me absolution; and if I die, you will cause masses to be said for my soul. Yet surely it were better to die than to linger on a miserable existence. Oh that some kind friend would give me that sleeping potion which would lull every woe to rest, since it is not allowed me to minister it to myself!"

The incessant prayer of Mr. Dermont over Lady Valville at length so far mitigated the anguish of her mind as to afford her exhausted and perturbed spirits some repose.

Valville then took the opportunity of quitting her chamber to go in search of Mr. Benson, who he expected to find had conducted Deletia back to the Abbey.

The consternation and alarm which had seized, not only every domestic, but the whole of the villagers, who flocked to the gates in consequence of the extraordinary events of the morning, prevented immediate observation that Miss Granville was missing, or any enquiry after her.

Lady Valville's frantic conduct was the theme of every tongue, and every eye was directed towards the windows of the mansion she inhabited with eager curiosity to learn her fate. Every apartment, every avenue, was searched in vain

for Deletia, and it appeared beyond a doubt that she was fled under the care, in all probability, of Mr. Rutherford.

Valville now became almost as frantic as his mother: he paced the long galleries of the Abbey, which he made reverberate with the name of Miss Granville, as he loudly called upon her. Servants were sent in various directions, whilst he, with hurried steps, made his appearance, unannounced, at the parsonage.

He impetuously and rudely accused the Rev. Mr. Arden of being in the conspiracy against him, in having favoured Miss Granville's elopement.

Mr. Arden heard him with mild and dignified composure. That he was angry and irritated he did not wonder, and as a fellow-creature he saw with concern the violence of a temper which gave way to the most unrestrained expressions of the wrongs and injuries which he sustained. The appeal which he made to

Mr. Arden he answered as became his sacred function. He told his lordship that it was a matter of satisfaction to himself, called upon as he had been to join their hands, that he had been prevented performing a ceremony promising so little happiness; and that the retribution which had that morning fallen on the head of Lady Valville was awful and striking.

"What mean you, sir," cried Valville, petulantly interrupting him, "your words are very ambiguous, explain yourself."

"I am as yet, my lord," returned the Rev. Mr. Arden, "little more than a stranger in this part of the country; but the tongue of rumour is perhaps more busy in remote corners than in large cities. The intended marriage of the splendid heiress of Granville Abbey with your lordship, has excited much wonder and conversation, as the young lady has never been seen, I hear, except by stealth, by even the villagers, and her

mother, Lady Deletia Granville, was idolised amongst them. Of course you know she died suddenly—so suddenly that——but your pardon, sir; the affair, though of the most melancholy nature from report, can alone be correctly known in the bosom of your own family.

"When, however," proceeded he, "I came, a stranger to the parsonage, I was, I confess, on the first day of entering the little church of Clovelly, much struck with the extraordinary monument erected there, and more particularly with the pathetic inscription, which naturally led to some inquiry and explanation of the subject."

"Ah! true," cried Valville, with quickness, after a moment's pause, "now that you speak of the monument, I will, sir, walk with you to the church and look at it. I never saw or knew that there was such a monument until this morning, when the sculptured figures

struck Lady Valville with such unaccountable horror, as to deprive her of temporary reason. You will oblige me by acquainting me what the device was intended to pourtray, as you heard it described."

"Pardon me, sir, I never repeat any thing by hearsay; but if you wish it, the sexton shall attend you. He no doubt will be able to explain the whole subject, having lived in the village above forty years, and is acquainted with the history of every grave in the church-yard."

The sexton was summoned.

CHAPTER XI.

When old Martin saw Lord Valville, and was desired to attend him to the church, a sort of hectic colour passed over his cheek, as he half drew back, and though he respectfully bowed to his lordship, he looked intimidated by his haughty and commanding manner.

"I will certainly show you, my lord, into the church," said he, in a querulous accent, "if you desire it. But the monument — I hope, sir, no offence — I knew my late lady, and she was so good, so beautiful — so kind to the poor — it makes my old heart ache to go near the place where she lies. There was not a dry eye, and nothing but sorrow and lamentation in all the country round

about when the doleful news was spread, that she came to an untimely — but I pray the Almighty it was not so — for the sake of those who — but I am strangely forgetting myself, and I beg your Honor will excuse it." He passed his hand across his eyes, to brush away a falling tear.

Valville, vexed and impatient, said sharply, " Come, come, my good man, have done with this long improbable tale, and open the door," — for they were now at the church-porch.

Valville walked hastily up to the spot where the monument stood. He was struck with the extraordinary device, and the faithful delineation of his mother's person in the figure which seemed to be addressing that which represented death. His eyes next rested on the inscription.

" This is most singular," exclaimed he, surprised and deeply penetrated.

" His Honor, 'Squire Granville, the disconsolate husband of Lady Deletia,"

said the sexton, "was in a poor low-spirited way, after her death, which made it a matter of surprise, his marrying again so soon, for his Honor used to come to me every night, and desired me to let him into the church, where he wandered up and down all the lonely midnight, as if he was beside himself. It was grievous to see how his Honor took on. A few days before he made away with himself, down came this fine marble monument all the way from London. His Honor stood by, and saw it put up in the place he directed, just by the side of the altar, as you see, sir. The people do say, that he made the words that are on the marble his ownself: and it is like enough, they be so sorrowful."

"The figures were copied from two pictures, which used to hang in the gallery at Granville Abbey. They are so natural to the life, the very marble do seem to speak."

Valville, who had listened with eager interest to old Martin's narrative, found himself unable to make any comment. He put some money into the poor sexton's hand, and thanking him for the trouble he had taken, he thoughtfully bent his steps towards the Abbey.

He pondered in silent meditation on what he had seen and heard. A thrilling sensation of awe, mingled with horror, was excited, as he traced the analogy Martin's detail bore to all the circumstances he had formerly heard; the authenticity of which could not be doubted.

To the design and execution of the monument, Lady Valville was a total stranger. The whole of her household were Catholics, and none of them had ever either entered the parish church or gone beyond the limits of the park, for those who once trespassed in passing the boundary of the grounds, immediately forfeited their place.

Valville's first step was now without

loss of time to pursue Deletia to Mr. Rutherford's house, for he was firmly persuaded that she was under his protection.

The perturbed mind of his mother gave him serious alarm respecting the state of her intellects, which threatened at times a total overthrow. After much deliberation, he resolved to remove her for the present to London, where he could not only have the most skilful advice, but she would there be beyond the reach of any danger.

He suggested his plan to Mr. Dermont, who not only highly approved the measure and offered to attend them to town, but undertook to prevail on Lady Valville to remove without delay.

Whatever might be the subject of Mr. Dermont's conference with her ladyship, the effect was favourable in the issue to the wishes of her son. She agreed to set out with the two gentlemen, attended by Mrs. Abbot, early the following morning.

The exhausted frame of Lady Valville did not admit of a rapid journey, and they were three days on the road before they reached the metropolis.

In the mean time Valville had sent off an express to a friend, to procure for him a handsome ready-furnished house, in the west end of the town.

Always cautious, artful, and selfish, he intended, before he fixed his mother in her new residence, to drive direct to Mr. Rutherford's house, hoping to find Deletia there, and by surprising and intimidating her, to compel her to return, since Mr. Rutherford could have no right to detain a person, to whom he considered he had a legal claim.

Had Lady Valville been aware that such was her son's plan, she would rather have fled to the most remote corner of the globe than have again met Deletia.

Valville had not communicated his intention even to Mr. Dermont, for he

was resolved no one should oppose him.

To Chancery-lane therefore they drove, and on stopping at the door of Mr. Rutherford, so wary was Valville, he said to the servant who came to the door, "We have business with your master, show us to him;" at the same time handing his mother from the carriage.

"My master, sir," said the girl, "is out of town; but I will let my mistress know, if you will please to walk in."

"Whose house is this," cried Lady Valville; "it is a strange, dark, shabby looking place. Where are you dragging me to? — I am not mad — surely you are not so cruel as to put me into confinement?"

"No, dearest mother," replied his lordship, "on my honour you may trust me. I have only brought you here on a matter in which I want your advice, if you will follow me; afterward we will

proceed to the house which I have taken, suitable to your rank, and which is prepared for your reception."

"Well, Valville," cried she, intimidated, "I will trust you, though I cannot guess what all this means."

The maid servant conducted them through a dark entry, into the same little, dismal back parlour, which two days before had received Deletia.

"A lady and gentleman, ma'am," said the girl, "who wants my master," as she threw open the door.

Mrs. Parker, much displeased at being thus taken by surprise by strangers, started away into a corner of the room, for she was rummaging out her cupboard; and said in an angry tone to the servant, "What do you mean by showing in company, when you know that I am busy? I should have enough to do if I was to see all the people who come to my brother. Mr. Rutherford had

better stay at home and attend to his business, than be driving over the country, I know not where, on some ridiculous affair."

"Then, madam, Mr. Rutherford," said Valville, greatly disappointed, "is really out of town?"

"Yes, sir, he went off yesterday morning with two young women he brought here in a strange suspicious way; for I could get nothing out of them, nor would Mr. Rutherford tell me where they came from; or where he was taking them. There was no good in the wind, you may depend upon it."

"Mr. Rutherford, said you?" exclaimed Lady Valville, looking wildly towards Mrs. Parker;—"then he knows what is become of Miss Granville? — Oh! let me not see her. — I cannot bear her reproachful eye. — Hide me from her presence, if indeed she is here. — The shade of her injured mother is ever before me. — Look, look!" pointing to the door,

and hastily retreating, as she concealed her face on Valville's shoulder. "Even now she rises from her tomb in judgment against me. Valville take me hence, if you would not quite destroy me!"

The wild expression of Lady Valville's countenance, together with her frantic gesture, filled Mrs. Parker with such affright that she stood aghast, and in great trepidation held the door of the parlour, waiting a favourable opportunity to make her escape.

Valville seeing her purpose, advanced before her.

"Be not alarmed, madam," said he, "my mother is not unfrequently seized with these fits, therefore do not regard her. Tell me but where the young lady is gone whom Mr. Rutherford brought to his house, and I will not detain you a moment."

Mrs. Parker was not in the mood to give his lordship any information; solely engrossed with the idea of self-preserv-

ation from the violence of a mad woman, (for such she thought Lady Valville,) she rushed impetuously between Valville and the door, flying with loud screams down the passage, into the street; where, alarming the neighbours, she said, "An unfortunate mad lady had got in, and she begged in mercy they would assist in trying to turn her out."

Valville seeing a crowd collect round the door, had no alternative, but in conducting his mother to the carriage, and driving to the house prepared for her reception.

He determined the next morning again to wait on Mr. Rutherford's sister, and draw from her, if possible, what knowledge she had of Deletia's destination.

The house which Valville's friend had taken for him was spacious and handsome, and situated in an airy, genteel part of London.

Lady Valville, pleased with its appearance, immediately withdrew to the suite of apartments which she selected for herself. The best medical advice was obtained without delay. Dr. —— assured Valville that her unhappy malady was no fixed disease, and that with perfect quiet and uncontroul her ladyship would soon recover. He heard this declaration with much satisfaction. The restoration of his mother's intellects was of the utmost importance for the promotion of his future prospects. But, notwithstanding the doctor's flattering report, he felt a secret apprehension that whenever Deletia was named, or again appeared before her ladyship, the malady would partially return. For the present Valville's first effort was to trace Deletia's present abode; and when it was discovered, if intreaty would not induce her again to bestow on him her hand, he trusted the law would favour his claiming her as his affianced wife.

The next morning, before noon, Valville was at Mr. Rutherford's door. In vain did he demand admittance to his sister. The terror which Mrs. Parker experienced from his former visit, prepared her to guard against a second surprise and alarm; neither intreaty nor bribery could prevail on the maid-servant to admit him. She stood in too much awe of her mistress to venture to disobey the positive injunction which she had given, not again to let in the gentleman.

Mortified and vexed, Valville was under the disagreeable necessity of returning home still in ignorance of what had become of Deletia; and the grievance was considerably augmented by the loss of another day.

Again he made a fruitless attempt to be admitted. But on presenting the young woman with gold, he at length obtained, through her medium, a direction to the livery-stable where the post-chaise had been ordered.

Mrs. Parker desired her to ask the postilion where he came from, and thus Valville obtained some clue to Deletia. He lost not an instant in going to Holborn, and with infinite difficulty he at last traced her the first stage on the high western road. He flung himself into a carriage and four, and from the information he obtained at the post-towns, he proceeded direct to Southampton.

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Rutherford travelled back from Southampton, after crossing from Cowes in the Isle of Wight, in the stage-coach; therefore, though he passed Valville on the road, he escaped his observation.

Fatigued and exhausted when he alighted at home, he was ill-prepared to parry Mrs. Parker's immediate attack, which burst upon him with violence.

"I hope you are well, Mr. Rutherford, after your journey," cried she in a jeering accent, "and have had agreeable companions. I really wish, brother, you would stay at home, and attend to your business in town, for the house has been nothing but confusion during your absence, putting quiet folks out of their

way, and frightening them out of their senses. I declare, I have not been myself since the mad lady came here the day before yesterday. Poor distracted creature! how she did rave, as she darted her black eyes at me. I declare the very idea of her makes me tremble from head to foot."

"I told you brother," continued she, "that you would repent meddling in other people's affairs. The young lord (I don't remember such out-of-the-way names) has been here every day plaguing one's heart out to know what had become of the young woman you took away."

"I hope you did not tell him," interrupted Mr. Rutherford alarmed, forgetting his sister did not know.

"I tell him, indeed! No, Mr. Rutherford, you took special care that I should not, for you never put that confidence in me to let me into your secret goings-on, and I hope you will

not again bring such suspicious people into your house, for I am sure if you are to lavish your money in the way I saw you do, I shall expect nothing less than that we both come to a workhouse in the end."

Mr. Rutherford did not attempt to interrupt his sister's harangue. He heard her out with patience; nay, he endeavoured to coax her into good humour, in the hope of learning some particulars of Valville's and his mother's alarming visit, which threw him into serious affright for Deletia's safety.

Mrs. Parker having vented her spleen at her brother, now chose to drop into a sullen fit, and not one word could he draw from her, more than she at first related of his lordship and his mother. He too clearly understood they had both been at his house, and were using every effort to trace Miss Granville.

Mr. Rutherford, now in hourly expectation of seeing Lord Valville, know-

ing his impetuous and fiery disposition, lost not a moment in writing to his brother-in-law, Mr. Clinton, informing him of the unforeseen and disastrous circumstance which had occurred, and requested him immediately to remove Miss Granville, for the present, along with his wife, to some place of greater security than the parsonage.

Neither the tender attention of benevolent strangers, the watchful care of Victoire, nor the sweet serenity of Nettleston, had any influence in restoring Deletia's frame to its natural vigour. She so long had struggled with adversity and perpetual harassment of mind, she sunk into the most alarming debility. A low nervous fever confined her wholly to bed, and the most serious apprehensions were entertained for her life.

Mrs. Clinton was the village doctress, and her household medicines had often restored many of the suffering poor; but the hapless case of Deletia was beyond

her skill. She hung over her bed-side with the most watchful vigilance herself, administering every cordial that fancy could devise; but in vain was all she gave, her disorder rose to the most alarming crisis. Victoire's grief was violent; with tears, and sudden bursts of anguish, she deplored her state, for Victoire passionately loved her young lady.

"Dear mademoiselle," exclaimed she, "what will become of the miserable Victoire if you die, for you are *très malade.*"

"Oh, madame," addressing Mrs. Clinton, "*pour l'amour de Dieu,* do think of some cordial to give mademoiselle, for I shall certainly break my heart if she is not better."

Victoire wept bitterly, and sighed as if her heart would break.

Deletia raised her heavy eye towards Mrs. Clinton and Victoire, who were seated beside her; and as she extended

an emaciated hand to each, she said, with a languid smile, "Weep not for me, good Victoire, rather rejoice that my sufferings are nearly at a close. During the few years of my brief life, little sunshine has gilded the morning of my youth, nor does the evening of them, had I been spared, promise any brighter ray to illumine their close. No tie of tender relationship has awakened kindred affection. If I, alas! have none to love, neither have I any to lament me. Lady Valville cut the slender thread of my hapless mother's existence; but soon I shall sleep on her cold bosom, in her marble tomb; for never yet did that bosom pillow the head of her Deletia."

"If the world had smiled upon me," continued she, "I should then, probably, have been less willing to quit this transitory scene, and fix my hopes on higher and more sublime views."

"Surely, then, I rather claim your

envy than commiseration; for soon, I feel firmly confident, my state will be completely beyond the reach of trial and persecution!"

"When you, my Victoire, shall take a last look at the companion of your youth, and, after bedewing with tears of fond regret, my early bier; then, when the village-bell tolls my funeral summons, invite the young maidens, who so late would have crowned my brow with blooming garlands, to hang them on my tomb, a happier, far happier offering, than that which would have decked my bridal brow."

Victoire with ardour pressed the hand which she held to her lips, and moistened it with the tears which fell copiously from her eyes. She possessed acute sensibility, and she was touched to agony at Deletia's pathetic address.

"If you die, mademoiselle, Victoire will die too."

"No, Victoire, you will live to be

happy. Mr. Dermont will send you back to France, and you say that is a gay country. You will dance and sing, as you were used in the days of childhood. Your pure and innocent mind will have no care to destroy enjoyment. The native vivacity of your disposition, when no longer clouded by vexation and the gloom of a sequestered life, will return with renewed gaiety."

"Your brothers and sisters will joy to see you once more amongst them. You will, as before, join in the merry dance of a summer's evening in your native province amidst the pastoral valleys of Normandy. And when remembrance may awaken a sigh to your departed friend, chace it away with the assurance that she is happy."

The gentle mind of Mrs. Clinton was also touched with the mournful strain of Deletia's conversation. Though she was so recently known, she felt much compassion for her sufferings, which had

been excited, she understood, by harsh and cruel conduct.

Mr. Rutherford had related her disastrous story, which awakened in the bosom of her husband and herself the sincerest sympathy. They determined to succour her with every tenderness that kindness could bestow.

The parsonage stood in a spot which afforded little opportunity of procuring medical advice, from being situated on an island some leagues distant from any large town. The present dreary and tempestuous March weather rendered it so hazardous to cross to the opposite shore, that even if Mr. Clinton's means had been sufficiently large to offer a physician's fee, they did not suppose any medical men would risk their lives in such boisterous weather, without being very liberally remunerated for their trouble.

Mr. and Mrs. Clinton's slender stipend admitted not of any table-indulgences

any thing in the shape of luxurious living was unknown at the parsonage, neither would it have been the taste of the simple inhabitants. Yet at this moment, Mr. Clinton regretted that his table was not covered with game, and his cellar stored with choice light wines, which might have induced their invalid guest to have taken some nourishment. Mrs. Clinton deplored the circumstance to her husband, and asked him whether he thought it would be possible to procure any delicacy of the sort, from some of the neighbouring gentry. "For," she added with much earnestness, "I have often seen sick persons much recruited by the unexpected sight of a delicacy which they have been tempted to taste when other food was rejected." Though Mr. Clinton made no reply to his wife's question, he listened to her with apparent attention, and taking up his hat and cane, he abruptly left the room, and disappeared.

Situated about a mile from the parsonage, stood a beautiful marine house, called Barton Villa. It was inhabited by a rich elderly woman of quality, who was the Lady Bountiful of the island, to the sick and distressed. Mr. Clinton was in the custom of visiting her weekly, and of pointing out to her ladyship such objects as he considered worthy to partake of her donation. He also was in the habit of reading prayers to herself and family at the same time. It so happened, owing to Mr. Rutherford's visit, Mr. Clinton had this week failed in his appointment.

When he was ushered in to Lady Barbara, he wore no look of servile humility, nor was he abashed in breaking his engagement, conscious that he was doing his duty in succouring the unhappy. He frankly told Lady Barbara, a higher claim had detained him, for that a sick young lady had been brought to his house, by a brother of his wife's, for

quiet and change of air. "Her situation," added he, "gives us great uneasiness and alarm, for she is very ill, and we have no means of procuring skilful advice. However, Nancy fancies herself something of a doctress, and she says, this interesting young woman, she is sure, would be sooner restored by what is called good kitchen-physic, than all the apothecary's draughts that could be given her."

"I came therefore," my lady, proceeded Mr. Clinton, "to petition you for the poor invalid. You are too kind not to excuse the liberty of my requesting if you have any game in the house a part, and a bottle or two of wine out of your cellar, for the young stranger, who, if she is not soon better, cannot live!"

"You shall have the best things, my dear sir, my house affords," cried Lady Barbara, good humouredly, rising with alacrity to ring the bell. "The house-

keeper shall send a basket immediately with game, fruit, and wine, to the parsonage."

"I cordially thank you," added she, "for rendering me the means of aiding a fellow-creature. If I were not old and feeble, I would accompany you back; for your account of this poor sick stranger is very interesting. What do you call her?"

A crimson glow spread over the face of Mr. Clinton; he was silent, and hesitated how to reply; at length he said, somewhat recovering himself, "Pray ask me not, my lady, I hate any prevarication; but I do not consider myself at liberty to disclose the young lady's name. There are some unfortunate — some unhappy circumstances connected with her life, which require particular secrecy and seclusion at this moment."

Lady Barbara was completely silenced. Though she was an old maid, she had neither the inquisitive curiosity, nor spirit

for detraction, which often belongs to that character. Her temper was placid, her spirit noble; she was candid and generous in her opinions; but Mr. Clinton's equivocal speech had raised doubt and surmises, which she endeavoured to banish, and for once she felt an irresistible desire to know something of the history of this unfortunate young woman.

Does not, thought her ladyship, his description imply a doubt as to the purity of her conduct, else why such peculiar secrecy and retirement at one period of her life more than another? The crimson blush so unusual, which suffused the cheek of Mr. Clinton, and his evident distress and hesitation, is singular.

An embarrassing pause ensued.

Lady Barbara's native good breeding restrained her, not only from asking a single question more in respect to the stranger, but left her at a loss to choose another subject.

Mr. Clinton walked up and down the room, in a restless sort of perplexity.

A niece of Lady Barbara's was sitting at an embroidery frame. She observed the embarrassment of the party, and seeing her brother at the moment cross the lawn with his gun and pointer, she started up, and said, " I am glad my brother is returned, I hope he has got some woodcocks in his bag, for they are a great delicacy; perhaps the poor sick young lady might fancy one. Is she handsome?" continued she, with an enquiring look at Mr. Clinton.

" Beautiful," returned he.

" So much the worse," interrupted her ladyship, with a severity not usual. Then vexed at her harshness, she added, " Poor thing? no doubt her beauty has proved the source of her misfortunes."

Mr. Clinton wished to change the subject. " Will it be convenient," said he, " to wait upon your ladyship on Sunday,

after divine service, to read prayers? with the snow still lying on the ground you will hardly, madam, venture out."

"We shall see you, sir, I hope, between this and Sunday: to-day is only Tuesday; I shall be anxious to hear of your fair invalid."

"Do," cried the young lady, "let us know. I am quite interested about her; perhaps when she is better I may be permitted to pay her a visit."

"You are very good, madam," returned Mr. Clinton, evidently distressed at the proposal; "but it will be long before so great an invalid will be able to admit visitors, and even if she was able I—I don't"——he stammered at a loss to proceed.

"My dear," said Lady Barbara, "persons who are ill must be oppressed by the sight of a stranger, even if the visit flows from the most benevolent motive, without they can administer good."

"Mr. Clinton," added her ladyship, "forgive my leaving you, I have letters to write for the post."

Mr. Clinton saw and felt the delicacy of Lady Barbara's conduct. He arose with an apology for having detained her so long, and took leave.

CHAPTER XIII.

When Mr. Clinton was gone, the young lady exclaimed, "The very mystery of this affair makes me, true woman-like, the more curious to hear the history of this beautiful stranger. I wish, aunt, you had not been so scrupulous in your inquiries. Yet I pitied good Mr. Clinton; he actually blushed rosy red, when you questioned him as to the lady."

"Mr. Clinton is naturally the most frank-hearted man alive, and disguise of any sort always sits very ill upon open and ingenuous dispositions. Poor man! His philanthropy, I am afraid, has unwarily drawn him into some awkward situation, which in honour he cannot disclose. Having once undertaken to

succour the unfortunate, he cannot withdraw where his humanity and benevolence is engaged. For my own part, I shall never embarrass him with any more questions; even if he again leads to the subject, I shall evade it. If the young woman is an unfortunate female, betrayed into error by a licentious character, she greatly deserves our commiseration. I know no man so able to mitigate the anguish of painful retrospection as Mr. Clinton. His genuine piety, meekness, and placid demeanour, with his soothing and persuasive accent, rendered eloquent by the pure and consoling doctrines which he utters, will inspire hope of forgiveness in the bosom of those who are not naturally addicted to evil."

The entrance of Lady Barbara's nephew closed the conversation. "There is no occasion," said her ladyship, "to name to your brother Mr. Clinton's visit: a basket with abundance of game is gone to the parsonage."

The painful anxiety and apprehension which Mrs. Clinton and Victoire had suffered on Deletia's account, was within the last few days considerably lightened by her rapid amendment.

Her youth, beauty, and misfortunes, together with the sweetness of her disposition, and patient suffering, had won insensibly the esteem of Mr. and Mrs. Clinton; they left no means untried to render their habitation desirable, and had the satisfaction to perceive Deletia was tranquillised in mind and improved in spirits.

The delicacies sent by Lady Barbara, Mrs. Clinton had prevailed upon her to taste. She was now able to sit up the greater part of the day.

The family were all assembled round the social tea-table, in a small apartment adjoining Deletia's chamber, when a letter was delivered to Mr. Clinton. He saw it was Mr. Rutherford's writing. He broke the seal, and having glanced over

the first page, he closed the letter, and abruptly left the room. Mrs. Clinton saw that her husband attempted to conceal the agitation which the letter had excited. Too prudent, however, to make any comment, she busied herself in endeavouring to divert Deletia's attention. She also had remarked Mr. Clinton change colour as he quitted them. "I hope," said she, "no unpleasant news has occasioned Mr. Clinton's abrupt departure."

Mrs. Clinton became greatly distressed and anxious for her husband's return, when above an hour elapsed without their seeing him again. More than once she left the room to listen for his step on the stairs. At length, alarmed at a circumstance so unusual, she ventured to tap at the study door.

All was dark and silent. She next inquired of the maid whether she had seen her master. "Yes, ma'am, he went out, about half an hour ago. 'If I am missed,' said he, 'tell my wife I shall

soon be back: if not, there is no occasion to causelessly alarm her.' "

The letter which Mr. Clinton received was as follows:

" To the Rev. Charles Clinton.

" My dear sir,

" A most untoward circumstance has occurred in my absence; and with all my caution I am much afraid the retreat of Miss Granville is discovered. I was perfectly aware that Lord Valville would leave no means unessayed to trace the unhappy fugitive; but that his mother would be the companion of his journey to town, in her disordered state of mind, was an event I could not possibly foresee. They drove direct to Chancery-lane. My sister, Parker, struck with terror at the frantic gestures and incoherent language of her ladyship, in alarm quitted the house.

" On the following day, Lord Valville attempted to pay her a visit, but she

refused him admittance, and was seized with one of her perverse fits, when neither intreaty nor persuasion could draw from her a single word. This perversity would fortunately have proved Miss Granville's safe-guard; but, alas! our female domestic was won over by the bribery of Lord Valville, and after my close questioning of her, she confessed having informed his lordship the name of the livery-stable from whence the chaise was ordered, which it seems my inquisitive sister had desired the girl to ask, while the carriage stood at my door, waiting our departure.

"By this means I have no doubt but Lord Valville's vigilance will be able unhappily to trace us from stage to stage as far as Southampton. Should he have discovered, through the medium of Benson, that I have a sister married to a clergyman in the Isle of Wight, Miss Granville's residence will easily be found.

"I cannot dictate what you ought to do, I leave it to your discretion where to fix Miss Granville in a place of security; and only request it may be without delay. I am inexpressibly grieved in being obliged to withdraw her from the tender care and protection which your house has afforded her; the more so, as I tremble for the unfavourable effect it may have on the fair sufferer, thus harassed, unhappy, and driven from place to place, without any permanent home, relation, or friend, to receive and support her.

"I rely, my worthy sir, on your prudence and kind consideration. Nancy is so excellent a creature, I know that from her Miss Granville will meet with every sympathy and kindness. I hope you will spare her for at least a few days from yourself and her young family, to accompany Miss Granville to whatever place you destine for her future abode.

Write without delay, and let me know whether it will be necessary for me to come to the island again.

"I remain,

"Dear sir,

Chancery-lane, "Your's faithfully,

March 10. "J. RUTHERFORD."

The contents of Mr. Rutherford's letter greatly perplexed Mr. Clinton. After turning various plans for Deletia in his thoughts, all of which seemed to be insecure, he saw but one possible measure to escape discovery. Once more he walked to Barton villa. He would frankly relate Miss Granville's distressing history to Lady Barbara, and by exciting her pity and benevolence, he felt assured his confidence would not be betrayed, and that in all probability her ladyship would offer her an asylum.

Mr. Clinton never before, except on ceremony, had been at Barton villa of

an evening. He was beginning an apology, when shown into the drawing-room, for the intrusion, but her ladyship good humouredly interrupted him, by saying, "To what, my dear sir, am I indebted for the favour of this visit; for I am sure it is some benevolent errand which has brought you at this hour of the evening? Pray tell me, without hesitation, what I can do for you?"

"You are very kind, my lady," said he, much encouraged to proceed from her favourable opening, "and on that kindness I now put my trust. But will you, madam, excuse me, if I break up your game at piquet, and request the honour of half an hour's conversation with you alone. Perhaps"—he looked round, not exactly liking to ask the young lady, and the gentleman who was reading at a table, to leave the room, nor did he know how to beg her ladyship to go into another.

Lady Barbara saw Mr. Clinton's embarrassment. "You will, nephew, find a fire in the library, and if you can endure so dull a thing as a tête-à-tête, with a sister for half an hour, I shall be glad if you will leave me with our good parson for that time, as he has something for my private ear."

The gentleman and lady immediately arose. The former graciously exclaimed, as he departed, "I hope Mr. Clinton will do me the honor some day of transferring his tête-à-tête to me, in allowing me to profit by the pleasure of his future acquaintance."

The young lady, slightly courtesying, added, "Nor will I be excluded: for I shall request the acquaintance to be extended to his amiable lady."

When they were withdrawn, Mr. Clinton began by saying,—"It was only a few days since, my lady, that I solicited your benevolent kindness for an unknown and unfortunate stranger put under my

immediate care. She is friendless—she is a fugitive—pursued from place to place, and the most entire secrecy, in regard to her present concealment, is of the utmost importance to prevent her from again falling into the hands of those who have occasioned her misery."

Lady Barbara's utmost candour was once more put to the test; for the language of Mr. Clinton was very ambiguous. She paused a moment,—"What would Mr. Clinton," said she very gravely, "require of me?—You say much to excite my compassion towards the fair fugitive; and what I can do with propriety, I will do cheerfully, to mitigate her sufferings.

"But," continued she, "I must know, sir, whether or not this young woman's misfortunes are occasioned from her own imprudence; and why she has no friends. Few are so very destitute as not to be possessed of some sympathetic one who is willing to become a sharer in affliction

as well as joy. I hope that I am not severe in judging, when I add, that I am afraid the young lady has, by some incaution, brought the sufferings which you describe upon herself. However, we will not now recriminate, but inform me how her ills are to be remedied."

"Will your ladyship," answered Mr. Clinton, "then indulge me by hearing the extraordinary history which I will unfold. This confidence which, madam, I am going to place in you, is due to the reputation of Miss Granville. It is pure as her excellent mind—pure as her transcendent beauty."

Mr. Clinton, as concisely as possible, related all the events of Deletia's life, as he had heard them from Mr. Rutherford.

When he had finished, her ladyship, with earnest warmth, exclaimed, "Miss Granville shall come to me. The carriage shall be sent to the parsonage, to bring her to Barton villa immediately."

"Wrapped in blankets she cannot catch cold; and she had better even take cold, than run the risk of again falling into the hands of the base Lord Valville. Here she shall have every comfort and indulgence which my house can afford. It is better suited for the accommodation of an invalid than yours; for I have abundance of people to wait upon her, I require so little attendance myself. Watson, my woman, is an obliging careful creature, and I hope shortly that our patient will do us credit."

"Forgive me, my lady," interrupted Mr. Clinton, "if I request Miss Granville does not see any of your household, except Mrs. Watson; privacy is of so much importance."

"She shall not, my good sir. But perhaps Mrs. Clinton will be so kind to accompany Miss Granville, and remain with her for a few days, until she is better."

"With pleasure," replied he, "my

wife will remain, if it is not intruding too many upon your ladyship, (for Miss Granville has a young French girl, Mademoiselle Maublanc, along with her,) and it would break Mademoiselle Maublanc's heart to be separated from her young lady."

"Let them all come; there is sufficient room."

The worthy curate returned home delighted in having gained his point. The benevolence of Lady Barbara, he thought, never had shone so bright as at the present moment.

When Mrs. Clinton heard the ring at the outer gate, she could not refrain rushing into the court to meet her husband, her apprehension was so painful for his safety, for the night was dark and stormy, the wind swept in angry blasts along the cliffs, which were washed with the high and roaring billows.

"My dear Nancy," exclaimed Mr. Clinton, tenderly folding his wife in his

arms, and addressing her in a cheering accent, "why this alarm?—I will now satisfy you as to the cause of my sudden absence, which, had you known before, would have proved only a source of uneasiness and apprehension."

He related to his wife the purport of his visit to Barton villa; and then requested her so to arrange her domestic matters as to be able to accompany Miss Granville, without loss of time, to Lady Barbara's; in the mean while he would prepare Deletia for her change of residence; and the absolute necessity for such a measure.

CHAPTER XIV.

The weak state of Deletia's frame and spirits rendered Mr. Clinton's communication a severer trial than she could well support. Bursting into an agony of tears, she exclaimed, "I hoped my persecution was now over, and that in this blissful abode my feeble and exhausted body would have been permitted, at least for a while, to rest here. But as it may not be, oh! sir, teach me fortitude and resignation, for I require them both."

"And you will have them, my dear Miss Granville, if you place your confidence in that Source whence springs every good. You cannot possess a better monitor than your own well-directed

mind; consult it, and you will not err. Though we weak mortals are too often blinded by error, yet, if we throw aside the veil, and look through the proper medium at good and evil, how greatly will the former preponderate!

"The very evil," proceeded he, "which causes your removal hence, will ultimately, my dear child, prove the source of good. You are going to the house of a benignant lady, where no harm can assail you, for you will be out of the even course of Lord Valville's pursuit. You will be in a mansion where every care and attendance will be bestowed; and more ably than here, because the means will be larger."

Deletia endeavoured to accede to the force of Mr. Clinton's argument, though she found it difficult to reconcile her mind to the truth of what he advanced.

With the aid of Mrs. Clinton, who was no less active than useful, obliging, and

prompt, she was assisted to Lady Barbara's carriage, and carefully rolled in blankets. Victoire was placed beside her; while Mr. and Mrs. Clinton with warm wrappings, and a lantern, followed them on foot.

The apartment for Deletia was prepared under the inspection of the venerable house-keeper, with every comfort requisite for an invalid before her arrival.

The chamber was lofty and spacious; yet of a sufficiently warm temperature, with the luxury of a couch to repose on when she quitted her bed.

Several works of devotion, and others of a lighter sort, were placed on a table, if she was well enough to read.

The small room adjoining her apartment contained a bed for Victoire.

The mansion of Lady Barbara was so admirably regulated, the most respectful attention was shown to every guest; whether of elevated condition, or moving

in an humbler sphere. The example was shown by her ladyship, whose manners were more courteous and engagingly affable, when her visitors were not of elevated rank; and she possessed such a happy art in conferring kindnesses as almost to persuade that she was herself the one obliged.

Deletia was immediately assisted to her chamber by Mrs. Clinton and Victoire. When the carriage drove to the hall-door, Mrs. Bell, the house-keeper, immediately made her appearance, and respectfully offered her services. She went before them with lights, and showed Deletia to her apartments.

"My lady, ma'am," said she, "requests that you will order whatever you fancy to take; to use no ceremony, but consider yourself at home. I assure you, ma'am, you will please my lady by so doing, for Lady Barbara is not one of idle unmeaning words. Whatever she says she means, and she would be

much offended, if every servant in the house did not pay you proper respect and attention."

Deletia, with a faint smile of grateful pleasure, requested Mrs. Bell to assure her lady, that she was sensible of her kind hospitality, and to offer her acknowledgments.

"My lady, ma'am," continued the house-keeper, "would have welcomed you herself to Barton villa, or sent her niece, but as you are so ill, her ladyship said you would be best alone; she has put you, ma'am, into the most lonely part of the house, that you may not be disturbed. But I will not intrude longer, ma'am, but wish you a very good night; Mrs. Watson will be up in a minute, with the tray; I have got a boiled chicken for you, ma'am, and some of the delicate eggs of the eider-down bird, which are a great rarity, for they are only to be had in this island. I hope you will try to eat one; they will do you good."

Mrs. Bell, as she smoothed down her white muslin apron, respectfully courtesyed, and took leave.

"To whom, dear Mrs. Clinton," said Deletia, "am I indebted for such unbounded kindness; do tell me the name of this benevolent woman?"

"Not to-night," returned she, "but indeed her ladyship is a blessing to the whole island; from the noble to the peasant, she is loved and respected."

"And who are her nephew and niece? Do they live with her? I am anxious to hear about them."

"I will satisfy your curiosity to-morrow, with every particular of this admirable family: to-night you are fatigued, and I positively will answer no questions."

Victoire was busily employed during the time Deletia was lying on the couch in minutely examining the room, and turning over every little ornament on the toilette. "O how pretty," cried

she, delighted. "Do look, mademoiselle," lifting the boxes one by one. "The apartment too looks quite cheerful, and is decorated just like our French ones, so light and airy. Only be well, mademoiselle, and we shall enjoy ourselves. I could almost fancy myself in one of the Pavilions * in Normandy. I have seen nothing in England to compare to this place. *C'est charmante*," added she, in a tone of rapture.

Then flying like a sylph (she trod so softly) to another part of the room, she opened a portfolio full of rare and beautiful prints.

"I must call you to order, Miss Victoire," said Mrs. Clinton, with a gentle rebuke; "as I am afraid you will disturb our young lady."

"No, no; that I would not *pour tout le monde*; but I am so happy," continued

* The villas of the bourgeois, so denominated in Normandy.

she, in transport; for I am certain that chevalier will not find us out here; and I know our dear mademoiselle will now get well; — Don't you think so, madame?" added she, looking with earnest inquiry in Mrs. Clinton's face, and taking her hand.

"I hope and trust she will."

Mrs. Watson entered with a tray full of nice things, which she spread before Deletia. Mrs. Clinton prevailed on her to take some refreshment, and then assisted Victoire in putting her to bed.

Mr. Clinton, after remaining in the drawing-room a short time, returned home to his children, leaving his wife at Barton villa.

Lady Barbara, aware of the bustle the removal of Deletia would make in her house, and the curiosity which naturally would be excited, if her arrival was accidentally discovered by her nephew and niece, thought it best to prepare them

for such an event, by just relating as much as she judged to be absolutely necessary, and no more.

After Mr. Clinton took leave, her ladyship went into the library, where she found her nephew and niece playing at chess. She interrupted them, by saying to the young lady, "I am afraid, my dear, you will think I treat you very rudely, first in dismissing you from the drawing-room, and next requesting you to change the chamber which you occupy for another. I expect a stranger guest here this evening; indeed, immediately; but ask me no questions, either from whence she comes, or who she is; for I am not at liberty to impart a single word respecting her; nor shall I see the person myself. That she is ill and unhappy is sufficient to excite your pity."

"And your ladyship's also, I perceive," replied her niece with an arch smile. "Then you are won over to the

cause of this fair unfortunate after all! — I thought my dear aunt with that benignant countenance, you could not stand out against such a petitioner as the worthy curate, when a case of distress came in your way."

" May I not see her then?" continued she. "How tantalising! Young and beautiful too, I think Mr. Clinton described her! — Brother, do you think you shall be able to resist trying to get a peep at her?"

Lady Barbara, half alarmed, replied very seriously, " I rely on the honour of you both to make no such attempt, and I wish you, niece, to change your chamber from its close neighbourhood to the poor invalid, who must not be interrupted or disturbed."

" Nor shall she," cried the young lady. " Not for worlds would I, unbidden or impertinently, intrude upon her. Sacred be her sorrow, and amended her health."

CHAPTER XV.

The morning after Deletia's arrival at Barton villa, Victoire, who had been absent about half an hour, came flying into her apartment, her face flushed and her eyes sparkling with joy.

" *Attendé*, mademoiselle," cried she. " Who do you think I have seen? You will never guess—no!—*cette impossible*—You cannot guess whose house this is."

" Lady Barbara Arden's."

" Yes *Arden*, mademoiselle, that I am certain is the name. The same as that beautiful demoiselle was called we saw during our *voyage* last autumn with Lady Valville. Lady Elinor is Lady Barbara's

niece. I have seen her this very moment as I ran along the passage; she called to me to stop; but I thought I would come first and tell you, mademoiselle, for I knew it would make you so very happy."

Victoire's incautious conduct, to make Deletia so *very* happy, made her, in her present weak state, faint away.

Victoire, distressed beyond measure at her heedlessness, with the aid of Mrs. Watson's restoratives had the satisfaction at length to see Deletia revive.

The sudden emotion of agreeable surprise which she experienced overcame her. When somewhat recovered, "I am then," exclaimed she, "indeed in the house of friends. How delightful a change from the tumult, the persecution of Granville Abbey. I shall consider, Victoire, what mode of conduct to pursue ere I make myself known to Lady Elinor Arden. With the leading events of my life she is no doubt acquainted. In the mean time do you remain here.

I shall consult with Mrs. Clinton what I ought to do."

Lady Elinor had returned to the chamber which she occupied previous to Deletia's arrival to fetch a book she was reading, when, swiftly passing her, she recognised with amazement the same French girl she had seen at Ilfracombe. Lady Elinor gave an involuntary start and exclamation.

She was going to address her, but Victoire fled with such rapidity, she was out of sight in a moment, leaving Lady Elinor, from her meteor-like view of her, transfixed for some minutes to the spot where she stood. She was lost in wonder and surprise at an occurrence so extraordinary, as the probability that Miss Granville was the person placed by Mr. Clinton beneath her aunt's roof, with so much caution and secrecy.

Lady Elinor had sought no confidence on this mysterious subject, she had made no inquiries, therefore she thought her-

self at liberty to communicate to her brother, Lord Dorringcourt, her rencontre; and she went in search of him for that purpose.

She found him in the library writing letters. When he beheld his sister, he paused. "I am telling Robina," said he, "that we shall be at home next week. The period of our visit to our good aunt is now expired, and our sister will consider us unkind if we do not soon return to Oakley Park. Shall you be ready to set out for Warwickshire on Monday?"

"I question, brother," replied she, half smiling, "whether you will be ready, when informed who is at present the fair inmate of this mansion."

"What means my sister?" replied he. "How can our journey be influenced by a person unknown, and who cannot possibly cause our detention?"

"Well, we shall see. Suppose such a romantic circumstance possible, as that

Miss Granville was at this moment the secluded and kindly cherished guest of our aunt; how then, Dorringcourt, would you act?" She looked at him very significantly.

"So strange, so impossible a conjecture," cried he, rising abruptly from his seat, "never surely would enter into the imagination of any one except my mad-cap sister Elinor. I know you sometimes like to alarm and surprise; but surely in this instance it were cruel to wantonly torture."

"Now you positively deserve," interrupted she playfully, "to be tortured, and not to have your curiosity satisfied.—Let me see," added she, gazing in his face.—"There is no look of earnest inquiry in your eyes,—no lover-like palpitation at your heart,—no suffusion of the cheek,—but such a total indifference, I verily think that I shall remain silent, and not tell you one word more."

Lord Dorringcourt walked up and

down the room in violent agitation, and at length said, very seriously, "Come, Elinor, sport no longer with my feelings —this is cruel in the extreme."

"Well! now that you play something like the part of a lover, I will keep you no longer in suspense." She then told him of her rencontre with Victoire, from which he fully believed Miss Granville was now in the house.

His lordship remained silent for some minutes.—"To know," exclaimed he at length, "that Miss Granville is an inmate here—ill—unhappy—and not to be able to express our concern, or offer to mitigate her sufferings, or even our sympathy. Oh Elinor! this is a trial I have scarcely philosophy to endure."

"Yet how is it to be remedied, when silence and secrecy are imposed?"

"True: and meanly to seek, by dishonourable means, any intercourse with the fair stranger, would incur such an

appearance of disingenuousness, that I would rather suffer the misery of suspense, than draw on myself the stigma of artfully endeavouring to seek her out."

Lady Elinor, almost as anxious as her brother to see Miss Granville, (for she doubted not but she was the secreted person,) resolved to be on the watch for the French girl, since accident had betrayed Deletia.

Lady Barbara Arden heard from Mrs. Clinton, with pleasure, that her guest was convalescent. Mrs. Clinton added, "that Miss Granville hoped, on the following day, to be allowed the honour of seeing her ladyship in her chamber."

Delicacy had restrained Lady Barbara from offering a visit, aware the presence of a stranger might distress her; but she felt pleased the wish to meet had come from Miss Granville, for she had some degree of curiosity to see a young woman of whom report spoke so highly; she

also wished personally to offer her every accommodation and hospitality which her house afforded.

When they met at dinner, all Lord Dorringcourt's lively spirits were fled. In vain he essayed to support that sportive conversation which usually passed between his sister and himself, to the great amusement of their aunt. The brilliant vivacity of his eyes was clouded with care. He was silent, and apparently so abstracted, that Lady Barbara several times repeated the same question before he attended to her; then he started from his reverie, and begging her pardon, endeavoured to enter into a conversation.

Her ladyship beheld with surprise the extraordinary change in her nephew since the morning, and anxiously inquired if he was ill. Ashamed of his absence, he tried to laugh at his abstraction.

It was Deletia's intention, when she had

seen Lady Barbara, to write to her niece, if she found she was really so happy as to be an inmate with Lady Elinor Arden. But she had no idea that Lord Dorringcourt made one in the interesting group.

CHAPTER XVI.

The afternoon of the following day, Deletia found herself able to receive Lady Barbara Arden.

The interview was anticipated, with a degree of impatient curiosity by each, but with a sentiment of such gratitude by Deletia, she was prepared before she saw her benevolent hostess, to respect and love her.

It sometimes happens, impressions favourably formed by persons of each other before they have met, either from description, circumstances, or some illusive idea, often renders expectation painfully disappointed, in not realising the object when seen as was pictured. Such, however, was not the present case.

Lady Barbara beheld a young woman, not, perhaps, so perfectly beautiful as she had been described; but, to her taste, she was far more lovely from the interesting expression of her countenance, which was lighted up with so much sense, intelligence, yet softness of character, she felt that Deletia Granville was a being whom she could at once take to her heart, without any danger of altering her opinion. Her soul spoke, in every turn of her features, its most ingenuous feelings; and her eyes beamed with a radiance, which, though almost dazzling, was softened by such an expression of sensibility as gave a liquid softness to their starry brightness. Deletia's manners possessed the polish of one who had lived in courts. There was a native elegance in her manners and address, which she inherited from childhood. Those manners had belonged to her mother, and, without ever having known her, they were transferred to herself.

Yet they were simple, because they were genuine, and what study and artifice could not have rendered half so captivating. But Deletia, at Granville Abbey, as far as exterior went, had no awkward examples. Lady Valville had always been distinguished for her insinuating and polished address. It is one of those dangerous talents, when artificial, which tends to ensnare the unwary.

Victoire Maublanc, the only juvenile companion with whom Deletia had ever associated, though merely the daughter of a bourgeois, was, like all the French girls, full of grace. She could not walk across the room without a degree of elegance rarely seen in England in ordinary life. Her sylph-like form and light movements rendered her a model for any artist. Her address, her gestures, were all graceful. Even her lively familiarity never bordered on any thing that was vulgar, or could offend.

Deletia possessed few advantages of edu-

cation; but her mind had been cultivated under the direction of good taste and sound judgment. Left much to think and act for herself, it had given peculiar seriousness and energy to her mind, which, from the cloud of obscurity which hung over her life, gave her a very pensive appearance; for she had met with little to excite those buoyant spirits which belong to the season of youth.

Deletia beheld in Lady Barbara Arden a woman of a dignified figure, and lofty carriage; but the benignity of her countenance, the pleasantness and affability of her address, at once set at ease those with whom she conversed. She talked to Deletia in the most soothing accents of kindness. Her voice was melodious; and, though her manners partook somewhat of the ceremonious formality of ancient times, her native urbanity corrected the cold precision which belonged to the old school.

"The salubrious air of this little

island," said her ladyship, " is very favourable for invalids; and, though I hope, dear Miss Granville, that you will not long come under the denomination, you will allow me, when you are recovered, the gratification of your company at Barton villa for as long a period as you do not tire of so sequestered a habitation."

The peculiarly kind and delicate manner in which her ladyship offered Deletia her continued protection, when she had no person to receive her, brought tears of gratitude to her eyes, which was all the acknowledgment she had the power to offer.

Lady Barbara directed her conversation to general subjects; and, after sitting an hour with the invalid, she rose to depart; as she did so, she took Deletia's hand with kindness. " Act, dear Miss Granville," said she, " precisely as if you were at home. Do as you like; call for what you like without ceremony,

and then I shall feel assured that you are at ease, and happy at Barton villa."

"Ah, madam!" exclaimed the penetrated Deletia, "can I be otherwise than happy here? Your ladyship's kind indulgence would oppress me, were I not assured of the benevolent source from which it springs; the delight of doing good to the wretched and distressed."

When her ladyship was opening the door to depart, Deletia called after her, "Pardon me, madam," cried she in a hesitating accent, — "but I would fain ask one question, if not impertinent, I am very anxious to have solved."

"I cannot suppose you can ask any to which I shall not willingly reply; what then, dear Miss Granville, would you say?"

"Your name, madam, is it Arden? — Is Lady Elinor Arden, your niece? — and is she in your house at this moment?"

"Wherefore would you know," replied her ladyship, surprised. "Are you acquainted with Elinor?—Have you ever met?—Perhaps you also are known to Lord Dorringcourt?"

"To claim the honour of an acquaintance," cried Deletia, colouring deeply, and in some confusion, "either with Lady Elinor Arden or Lord Dorringcourt, is a liberty to which I do not presume. Yet accidentally thrown in their way more than once, perhaps they may recollect such an insignificant being as Deletia Granville."

"Shall I name you to them?" said her ladyship. "Will you send any message?"

"No message: that madam would be too great a liberty, but a line to Lady Elinor, perhaps, you will not object to Victoire's delivering."

"Certainly not. I would take it myself, but your spirits are hurried, my dear, and you had better try to

regain composure, therefore Mademoiselle Maublanc shall be your ambassadress."

Lady Barbara took leave, promising to see her again on the morrow.

CHAPTER XVII.

Deletia having reposed for half an hour, took up the pen to write to Lady Elinor. She blotted several sheets of paper before she could please herself; at length, she dispatched these few lines:

"To Lady Elinor Arden.

"If Lady Elinor Arden recognises in Deletia Granville, the solitary stranger whom she encountered more than once last autumn in North Devon, and had the benevolence to address by letter, (though it never reached her,) she shall feel greatly flattered if her ladyship will now allow her to claim the acquaintance then proferred, and will indulge Miss Granville with a visit in the apart-

ment Lady Elinor's benignant aunt has allowed her to occupy."

Victoire, who had been amusing herself in exploring every part of the pleasure-grounds during Lady Barbara's visit, now returned.

"This is a lovely place, Mademoiselle," exclaimed she, "every thing you can fancy to amuse; such a variety of curious birds, all so tame, they ate out of my hands, pretty creatures. Flowers too of every sort; they quite perfume the air with their fragrance in the place where they stand, one above another; looking as gay as summer. You know Mademoiselle, Lady Valville never cared for any thing of the sort, every thing was *sombre* at the old château, every body melancholy, which I suppose was the reason the conservatory was neglected. Do come to the window and look at the view from the cliff just before you, with

the sun sparkling on the sea, with all the green-hills which slope to the ocean, peeping through the snow."

"I hope to see and enjoy the view," replied Deletia; "but in the mean time take this note, and with your own hand present it to Lady Elinor Arden."

Victoire took the billet, she saw her ladyship with her brother at a distance, walking on the cliff, and quickly advanced to meet them. She took the note which was eagerly opened, and having read it, she said, "Tell, Miss Granville, that I will do myself the honour of waiting upon her immediately."

"Kind lady," replied Victoire, "Ma demoiselle will be transported to see you." She ran along the cliff with speed to give Deletia the intelligence.

"Then," cried Lord Dorringcourt, with emotion, "Miss Granville is actually here! Oh, Elinor! How I envy you this visit. Ask, intercede for me, that I also

may not always be excluded; as one of her most ardent well-wishers, I surely may be privileged to see her."

"I will have nothing to do with you," returned she, in a sportive accent. "You must plead your own cause, and I doubt not you will be heard, if you manage adroitly."

Lady Elinor, who, like her brother, was too noble-minded to act with even the appearance of dissimulation, before she visited Deletia, showed her aunt the note which she had just received from Miss Granville, and told her that hereafter she would explain their transient acquaintance with each other.

It was an interesting and delightful moment to Deletia when Lady Elinor made her appearance. She half rose from the couch on which she was reclining, to receive her, and extending her hand, exclaimed, "How kind, how condescending is this visit!"

"Welcome, thrice welcome," replied

her ladyship, as she saluted Deletia, "sweetest Miss Granville, to the house of my aunt; here, I trust, you will be happy, for here you will be free from persecution."

"But remember," continued she, "that other friends have a claim upon you; when you wish to change the scene, Oakley Park is open as ever to your reception: we will, however, talk of that hereafter; for I hope you soon mean to be well, and give us your company below. We else shall be tempted to quarrel with you, and murmur not a little at this selfish banishment."

"Now, indeed," cried the delighted Deletia, "I have powerful incitements to be well; and shall consider every day that I remain in my apartment as one lost from the society of my charming friends."

"But," said Lady Elinor, sportively holding up her finger, "I have, Miss Granville to call you to a severe account when we

are etter acquainted, for not suffering us sooner to become participators in your sorrows. Nothing but secrecy and silence were imposed, as if my aunt were apprehensive my brother was going to play Lord Valville, and carry you off *per* force.

"Not," added she, looking archly, "but there is some danger, I admit, if you look at him as you do now at me, with such a bewitching smile."

"O fie, Lady Elinor," said Deletia, laughing.

"Well, but," interrupted her ladyship, "when are we to hear of all the hair-breadth escapes you have had from that abominable Lord Valville? — To be serious, my sweet friend," added she, "you possess our truest sympathy, and it is not impertinent curiosity, but the tenderest interest in your concerns which excites a desire to hear what has befallen you since my brother rescued you at Clovelly."

"My sufferings," replied she "have been of no ordinary description; but now they seem ended; as with your ladyship no confidence will be violated, perhaps you will not be disinclined to hear my disastrous story from Mrs. Clinton, when next she comes to Barton villa; I am unequal to the detail myself."

Lady Elinor thanked Deletia for her proposed confidence, and then added, "There is one other person to whom I would wish that confidence extended, if you will not consider me, sweet Miss Granville, too great an encroacher. Once an advocate in your cause, is not Dorringcourt somewhat entitled to know how afterwards Lord Valville deported himself towards you?"

"Ah! madam, ask not at present; you shall hear from Mrs. Clinton every particular. If indeed your noble brother is interested in the fate of a hapless and much-injured orphan, he is fully entitled to every particular."

"Who would not be interested that has once seen Miss Granville?—Yet I am afraid that Dorringcourt will pay dearly for his curiosity in the loss of his peace. Since he has known that you are here, he has been listless and anxious. But, true woman-like, I am telling tales, and perhaps shall do mischief; therefore, before it is too late, I had best make an honourable retreat. Adieu!" added she, affectionately pressing Deletia's hand. "Have you any kind message to my brother; what shall I say to him from you?"

"Assure Lord Dorringcourt that I retain a grateful recollection—"

"Nonsense," interrupted her ladyship, "gratitude and love never went together. Gratitude and esteem for benefits conferred, is a sort of constrained sentiment. Dorringcourt will have none of it.--But when you really know my brother, the generosity of

his soul, the elevation of his sentiments, founded on the basis of the purest integrity, with the most noble openness of heart, will ensure a disinterested friendship, you will find him worthy of possessing!"

Lady Elinor gaily glided out of the room.

"Charming Lady Elinor!" exclaimed Deletia mentally. "How are you formed to reconcile me to the world, to teach me even to feel an interest in it. Little does Lord Dorringcourt require an advocate in my bosom, born as he is to create admiration and excite esteem. And may I," whispered she, "indulge the flattering hope that he bestows a thought on the desolate Deletia? Yet why indulge so dangerous a hope when fatally contracted to another. Though the tie apparently is severed, will not Valville claim me—*force* me to be his, or by some act of violence destroy Lord Dor-

ringcourt, and thus terminate every earthly happiness."

When Deletia dwelt on the past, and what might be the events of the future, the most gloomy presages took possession of her, and she sunk into despondence.

Mrs. Clinton, who had returned to her family for the day, was shocked, when she came back in the evening, to find the least exertion proved too much for Miss Granville's languid state. The following day she kept her perfectly quiet, and would not allow her to see any part of the family.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VALVILLE, with much difficulty, traced Deletia to Southampton. After lingering there for a week in fruitless pursuit, disappointed and out of humour, he returned to town. He found that he was losing time, and hoped, either by persuasion or violence, to draw from Mr. Rutherford where he had placed Miss Granville.

He was ignorant that Mr. Rutherford had a married sister residing in the Isle of Wight; and as he had no means of learning at Southampton what route Mr. Rutherford had taken on arriving there, (for they had not alighted at any inn,) he considered his wisest plan was now to

return to Chancery-lane and insist upon admittance.

On reaching London Lord Valville waited upon Mr. Rutherford, who immediately received him on sending in his name.

He demanded of him, in a very peremptory manner, Miss Granville; and threatened to represent his case before the court of law. Mr. Rutherford told his lordship he was at liberty to bring forward his case; that Miss Granville would soon be of age, and then no law could constrain her to bestow her hand, except by inclination. That he would protect and plead her cause in the face of the whole counsel.

"You are, sir," said Valville warmly, "very bold, officious, and presuming. You have no power," added he, turning pale with rage, "to withhold Miss Granville from me — she is my affianced wife, and by heaven I will pursue her to the world's end, rather than she shall elude

me. Were we not, sir, at the altar together?—Did she not consent to be mine, when the ceremony was so unfortunately stopped by the malady of my mother—once, however, commenced, who shall dare to say that Miss Granville is not mine, and mine only?"

"That Miss Granville consented to be yours, my lord, is a circumstance so involved in mystery, considering the repugnance which she showed at first to the union, from herself alone I must be satisfied that some unlawful measures or threats were not practised, before I can exoncrate either Lady Valville or your lordship. The paper Miss Granville produced, which, when seen, almost deprived your mother of reason, and you so eagerly attempted to destroy—the mysterious figures in the church, that appalled her ladyship, and caused the interruption of the solemn ceremony, must lead to some terrible mystery which lurks behind, and which, when explained,

seems to promise only disgrace — perhaps even something more dreadful. Let me then, my lord, advise you to drop your present pursuit, for, as surely as you follow it up, you will in the end destroy your mother: and for yourself, wealth not honourably attained will carry a sting along with it which will never allow you a peaceful moment. You will, my lord, not be able to look at your wife without conscious shame, for the injury you have done her."

Valville essayed to speak, but his voice faltered, and his emotion was so great he trembled violently.

He took up his hat, and stammering out "You shall hear from me, sir; this insolence is not to be supported with impunity," rushed out of the house.

Cowards are soon disarmed. Mr. Rutherford had probed Valville to the quick; and he became almost as frantic as his mother, with the sensations which overwhelmed him.

Lady Valville, removed from the scenes and the object which ever awakened the most agonizing remembrances, now experienced from her residence in London a temporary suspension of remorse. The skilful advice and discipline of D—, mitigated the nervous irritability under which she laboured, and during the period of her son's absence her ladyship recovered wonderfully.

Valville was agreably surprised to find his mother in so tranquil and comfortable a state. He hoped now she would be able to assist him in the necessary measures which he intended to take for the recovery of Deletia.

He informed her ladyship of his late unsuccessful journey, and of the insolence with which Mr. Rutherford had conducted himself; of his determination to support Miss Granville, and requested her ladyship to point out what mode of conduct was now to be pursued. "I shall certainly," added he, "prosecute

Mr. Rutherford for carrying off and concealing my affianced wife."

"Ask me not, Valville," cried his mother with agitation and alarm, "to again interfere — act for yourself henceforth — not for all that wealth can purchase would I be again engaged in scenes, where fraud, iniquity, and hypocrisy, carry a sting with them so terrible, that all the penances and masses in the world cannot wash out."

"You know," continued her ladyship, "the device I practised to obtain Deletia Granville for you; to give you the possession of her estates. What a mother could do for the interest and prosperity of her son, I did. — Oh Valville! I may say with the fallen Cromwell, it is "*towering ambition* which has destroyed me." It has broken my peace; it has undermined my health; it has shaken my intellect; and made me the veriest wretch that ever was created."

"Would to heaven it were possible to recall the moment when, innocent and happy, I first entered the gates of Granville Abbey; loved — adulated by Lady Deletia and her fond husband. Surely some demon prompted me to sap the foundation of the happiness of that blissful pair! — Oh! Valville! she was beautiful as one of those celestial beings which inhabit the highest heavens. — She shone like the morning star, rejoicing on her way. Her mind was as lovely as her person — she was full of goodness — so was her hapless husband. — But for *you*, left titled, yet almost portionless, never should I have summoned courage to commit the fatal ——. Hush! — remember, I do not tell you," added she, in a whisper, "what was the deed. — Sufficient to say, Mr. Granville, after a short period, became my husband. — You know his only child, Deletia Granville, was sole heiress to the estates of

Granville Abbey, in right of her father; but as his surviving widow; I was to reside on them till she came of age.

"From the period," continued she, "of his death, I resolved to unite you to the orphan heiress, and I could the better effect my purpose, having, in one of Mr. Granville's desponding fits, prevailed upon him to express in his will the wish that you should be united; at the same time, I urged him to make me the sole trustee for Miss Granville, having her, during the years of her minority, intirely under my guidance and power.

"On your return, a few months since, from your travels, when you arrived at the Abbey, I perceived you averse from matrimony, though I left no means unessayed to engage your admiration and affection for Miss Granville. You treated her with polite gallantry, but not with that respectful attention which was likely to gain her esteem as a favoured lover.

I was, therefore, at length, compelled to tell you the advantage which you would derive from an union with a young woman, who, from your cavalier behaviour, I saw at once you supposed a dependant.

"Indeed it was necessary to make Deletia believe that she was so, till she attained to years of maturity, or there would have been no tolerating her conscious superiority over me, whom she, no doubt, always in her heart disliked."

"You tell me, madam," cried Valville, contending with the various emotions which overwhelmed him, "what you thus far have done; but if the accomplishment of our desires still remain unfulfilled, of what avail is it to repeat the past, without executing the future. Miss Granville is yet unpossessed, and the estates cannot be mine."

"That they have not been yours, is not my fault.—Whatever invention could devise, I did for you—Nay, have I not

even, Valville, endeavoured to sanction the marriage ceremony with my presence; your heretical principles prevented the ceremony being performed at home; at least some foolish prejudice of yours, because you had taken an aversion to Mr. Dermont, made you chuse to have the service read in church. Of course you knew not, you could not guess the appalling objects which were there. — Oh! when I beheld the figure of Lady Deletia Granville, extended on the cold tomb lying before me, though imaged in marble, and my own hand directing the fatal dart to be pointed at her guileless heart. Awe-struck, Oh! the pang of sore remorse was overwhelming! Reason tottered on its throne, and the sensations of that hour brought all the torments of the lower world before me!"

"Valville, cried his mother," in an emphatic voice, "I solemnly declare, that for me, Miss Granville is at free-

dom. If *you* have influence to win her over, I shall not prevent it. Never more shall I return to Granville Abbey. I renounce the world henceforth; and with the slender portion which I possess, shall live in total seclusion."

"If you abide, madam," replied he dismayed, by such an extraordinary resolution, I shall certainly try to effect by force what influence cannot accomplish, if Miss Granville persists in departing from her engagement. I consider her as entirely my wife as if the whole ceremony had been gone through. It is impossible she can legally refuse to accomplish the performance of her vows; at least I shall try it; if I live on the high-road, I will not rest until I regain her."

"Does Lord Dorringcourt," proceeded he, "suppose I will tamely submit to resign her — for that Dorringcourt has a fondness for her, and Miss Granville a preference for his lordship, I am fully

convinced. I have not forgotten his meddling and impertinent interference at Clovelly, the anxiety which she discovered at Linton, nor their first rencontre at Morthoe bay.—No! all these events live in my memory; and if I possess not Miss Granville, fatal to his lordship shall prove our *eclaircissement.*"

"What, madam," continued his lordship, with impatient apprehension, "will the world say to your inconsistent conduct, in first eagerly promoting a union with Miss Granville, and then taking no after-measures to bring her to a sense of her duty? You cannot surely be in earnest, in what you purpose?"

"Most solemnly, I assure you, I am resolved to use no measures to again bring you together. If, as I said, Miss Granville does not object to the ceremony being once more solemnized, I will remain neuter."

"And you really, madam," exclaimed he, losing all temper, "are to be fright-

ened with a phantom. Where is the firmness, the intrepidity which has always distinguished Lady Valville! Oh, mother! Rouse your sleeping energy, again assume the resolute spirit which belongs to your character? Let it not be said, that the inanimate marble, assuming a human form, had the power to disarm you!"—

His lordship took his mother's hand, with tender and earnest intreaty.

"Oh, Valville!" returned she, for a moment half subdued, "talk not thus—I dare not—I cannot—nay," added she, after a pause, with new firmness, "I *will* not listen to you.—When that inanimate marble, wearing, as you say, a human form, is moulded into the image of the being it is intended to personify; when except in breathing, she lives before me, with all that meek resignation which beamed in her celestial eyes, e're they were closed for ever on her destroyer!—Oh, tell me not of firmness of resolution—

Mine is all fled — I am a poor guilty creature — but Valville, I am not mad — I am no longer touched with partial insanity — Leave me then, while reason is restored, to penitence and to prayer — I have done with the world — I renounce its delusive vanities, I have seen the feebleness of riches to purchase happiness — my mind has been a perfect chaos for long, long years — my haughty spirit is now subdued — and if you would not again set my brain on fire, you will, Valville, suffer me to rest in peace."

Lady Valville waited not for a reply, but rushed impetuously from his presence. Valville was so much amazed and stunned, by the firm and singular conduct of his mother, he was left for some time without power to think or to act.

The determination she had avowed was a death-blow, not only to his hopes, but to his ambition. Though the native sweetness of Deletia had insensibly

won upon his heart, his views were of too aspiring and selfish a nature to have prompted him to have sought her in wedlock, if she had been portionless. But when a splendid fortune was combined with a captivation of manner, a loveliness of person, and a strength of understanding which he had rarely seen equalled, and never surpassed, Valville was filled with despair and misery, at the bare possibility of losing her for ever.

His lordship knew enough of his mother's stability of character, when once she took up an impression, to doubt her carrying into effect her present purpose. Sensible, persecution would avail nothing, he was obliged to endeavour patiently to submit, and suffer her ladyship to remain in the seclusion which she had chosen. He scarcely dared flatter himself she would alter her opinions; and he relied more on the partial return of her malady to favour his plans, than her present state of tranquillity.

Listless, unhappy, and totally at a loss what measures at present to adopt with respect to Deletia, his lordship determined to leave Lady Valville quiet and alone for a few days; and to go to Granville Abbey, in the vague hope of being able to learn from some of the domestics tidings of Miss Granville.

The abrupt departure of all the family rendered it necessary to consign the household to the care of some trusty person during an absence, which it was possible might prove of considerable length.

CHAPTER XIX.

With impatient anxiety Lord Dorring-court waited the termination of his sister's visit to Deletia. He watched her descending from the staircase, and went to meet her. Without speaking, he led her from the hall to the lawn,—and when distant from any person who could either see or hear them, he said, with earnest inquiry, "May I hope that Miss Granville allows me a place in her remembrance? — Give me the assurance, dear Elinor, that she is not very ill, and that soon she will be restored to the society which she is formed to grace, and I shall be happy!"

"How many questions have I to answer? — one, two, three! First, Miss

Granville has not forgotten Lord Dorringcourt; secondly, she is, I hope, recovering; and, thirdly, she will soon give pleasure to her friends in the charm of her society. Now, brother, are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly, as far as regards the honour Miss Granville does me, in recollecting there is such a being as myself. But you still think her ill? Tell me, Elinor, from what cause has sprung that illness. I greatly fear it has been occasioned by unkindness and persecution. That a creature so interesting, whose very countenance solicits regard, should be treated with any thing but tenderness, appears almost an impossibility."

"The melancholy and languor," replied Lady Elinor, "painted in Miss Granville's face, does too certainly proclaim she is not happy. But that she has escaped persecution and oppression, let us rejoice. She is now, I hope, finally

with those who will do every thing to promote her ease and comfort."

"Mr. Clinton," added she, "is to relate to us this evening the particulars of events, the very recollection of which distressed Miss Granville to call to remembrance, and she found herself unequal to dwell on."

Lady Elinor now sought her aunt. She communicated to her ladyship all she had formerly known of Miss Granville. Mr. Clinton joined them at dinner, and, after tea, excited the interest and commiseration of the whole family, in the narrative he gave of Deletia's sufferings and destitute situation.

The tenderest sympathy was awakened in the bosoms of Lord Dorringcourt and Lady Elinor. But a feeling of apprehension for Deletia's future safety took possession of his lordship; for Mr. Clinton did not conceal from them the late threatening visit of Lord Valville to Mr. Rutherford; and he foresaw, with

alarm, in the event of dicovery, tenfold would be the misery which would ensue.

The affair at Clovelly had discovered the fiery temper of Valville, and though, to Doringcourt's surprise, his bold interference had been passed over in silence, he was assured, that some hidden motive, which it was impossible to fathom, had occasioned such an unmanly appearance of cowardice on the part of Valville.

At Granville Abbey his lordship obtained no information of Deletia. Most of the domestics, ignorant and superstitious, were panic-struck, and considered the events which had occurred as a just punishment fallen on the head of Lady Valville. Since her removal village gossip was very busy in collecting every circumstance connected with the history of the family. People had come from all parts of the country to look at the monument, so extraordinarily had public curiosity been

excited by the strange reports circulated abroad; and when Valville arrived, he found himself so much the subject of wonder and curiosity, he was glad to return with speed to London.

Valville was fated to be mortified and disappointed in all his views. At the very moment he seemed to be reaching the pinnacle of his ambitious designs, he was plunged into the abyss of misery and despair.

When he reached his house in town, he observed with surprise all the shutters closed in the front rooms. He eagerly inquired of the porter who opened the door, what was the occasion of the present deserted state of the mansion? "Is Lady Valville ill?" cried he, impatiently — "dead — or what is the matter?"

"My lady is not dead," replied the man, "that I know of, but she is not here, my lord."

"Not here!" cried Valville, in a transport of rage. "Gracious heavens! what

do mean? — Where is my mother? — Keep me not in suspence a moment?"

"I don't know, sir, where my lady is gone, nor does any person in the house. We have all been at our wit's end what to do. My lady went out with Mr. Dermont and Mrs. Abbot, as they were used, early in the morning to mass, and they never came back again."

"When did this happen?"

"The day after your lordship went out of town."

"Why did you not send an express after me, you stupid fellow?"

"We did not know, my lord, where to send. If my lady knew where you was gone, she was the only person who did."

This, indeed, was a blow, which Valville little expected. He was almost wild with rage and indignation; for he was convinced the subtle priest had influenced

his mother, and instigated her to make her escape. Prepared, as he now was in some measure, to find his mother still resolute in withholding all further interference with respect to Deletia, he yet was not at all prepared for an event so fatal to his ambition, and those aspiring hopes which she had raised, and allowed him to cherish in his bosom.

After much consideration what measures next to take, Valville, with some difficulty obtained an interview with the chancellor. He represented the case of Miss Granville, and the claims he had upon her. Unfortunately for him, Mr. Rutherford, of whom the chancellor entertained a high opinion for his integrity, his worth, and his abilities, had been with him previous to his lordship's visit, and empowered him so to act, that Deletia was permitted to remain safe under the protection of Lady Barbara Arden for the present.

Valville having no means of either tracing Deletia or his mother, retired to his house in sullen silence.

Revenge was now the passion which he determined to exercise at a favourable opportunity; and with feelings even more diabolic than those which had formerly insigated his mother's actions, he withdrew to another kingdom, where he gave indulgence to all his evil passions, by plunging into every sort of vice and dissipation.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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